

Developing Leaders at Every Level of the Agency

by Ms. Katherine Crawford, Staff Writer

The Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) is in the process of transforming itself into a “leader-centered” organization. To achieve this transformation, Maj. Gen. Scott and Mrs. Flavin, DCMA’s director and deputy director, respectively, are extending leadership development training to people at every level of the Agency. The reasoning behind this idea is that at some point all people act in a leadership capacity regardless of level. This type of thinking represents a significant cultural change.

(Right) Mr. Willie L. Foreman, workforce analyst, Workforce Development Division, is overseeing the leadership development programs at DCMA. (DCMA staff photo)



DCMA is in the process of transforming itself into a “leader-centered” organization.

Two recent Agency assessments are helping to drive change. The first was an Organizational Assessment Survey compiled by the Office of Personnel Management that examined workforce views of management. DCMA is trying to design strategies to move the Agency forward and to increase employees’ sense that they are being treated fairly. Some of these strategies include: designing a mentoring system; providing cross-training opportunities to fill needed positions; encouraging retention; and including lower-graded employees in the communication process.

The second assessment is the Agency-wide Competency Assessment, which began in 2002 and continues today. This assessment was conducted by DCMA to measure its leadership and technical competencies and to identify gaps in workforce leadership skills. The findings indicated several “definitive gaps” among the leadership ranks in the areas of:

- change management
- coalition building

- creativity and innovation
- developing others
- entrepreneurship

The goal is to close these and other gaps, thereby building better leaders.

To address the gaps found in the two assessments, DCMA has initiated a series of leadership training activities that it plans to continue and expand. This is important because in the next five to six years, 60 percent of current managers will be eligible to retire so DCMA needs to begin developing new leaders in the organization now.

DCMA needs to use overarching strategies to build new leaders in the organization.

Mr. Willie L. Foreman, a workforce analyst in the Workforce Development Division at DCMA Headquarters, oversees the development and implementation of the leadership programs. Mr. Foreman believes that in order to focus on a leader-centered culture, the Agency needs to look at leadership somewhat differently than it has in the past. When looking at the idea of leadership “from a holistic perspective,” Mr. Foreman sees five



Leadership Development Communities

... Maj. Gen. Scott and Mrs. Flavin are saying, “We need to start building leadership skills at the general workforce level.”

communities. And of the five communities, he is primarily focused on the following four:

- **Senior Leaders (GS-14 & -15)**

The members of this group have management experience, so the challenge is to find and provide them with specialized training that might not be needed by members of the other levels.

- **Supervisors, Managers & Team Leaders (GS-9 through -13)**

These individuals have already been selected as leaders. Some are comfortable with these roles, some need additional development, mentoring or training. The challenge is to find growth opportunities that these people will find valuable.

- **Potential Leaders (GS-7 through -13)**

This group of leaders wants to be known to their managers so they can be mentored. They have a burning desire to become leaders and want to know what steps they need to take in order to achieve leadership positions.

- **General Workforce (GS-5 through -15)**

Individuals in the general workforce group may simply want to take a leadership or technical course here and there. The challenge is to find consensus about types of courses to offer.

The fifth community, which Mr. Foreman is not currently focusing on, is that of the senior executives.

According to Mr. Foreman, in the past, the top two levels received the majority of the training funding, “but General Scott and Mrs. Flavin are saying, ‘No, we need to start building leadership skills at the general workforce level.’” And if their views can be successfully implemented, “I think we can truly say that we are becoming a leader-centered culture because we’re providing everyone at every level of the Agency with leadership training.”

The supervisors, managers and team leaders themselves are an integral component of the Agency’s plans to build leaders. “If we are

successful in educating [this group] in their roles as mentors and coaches, inherently that’s going to drive more training down toward the bottom two levels, because they too will be growing managers. Every one of DCMA’s employees should be looked at as a potential manager,” explained Mr. Foreman. Supervisors, managers and team leaders need to carefully examine all employees’ Individual Development Plans, in which they determine their future training needs and identify areas for development.

In the past nine months, the Agency has offered the following opportunities for leadership development:

Cohort Program

Supervisors, Managers & Team Leaders — Initiated by District West, the Cohort Program has been adopted for use Agency-wide. The program involves a series of five courses, delivered over a three- to four-month period. To build networking and camaraderie and foster a sense of community, attendees take all classes as a group.

For more information about this program, written from the perspective of a participant, see “Cohort V: A Leadership Model for All of DCMA” on page 18.

Field Trip to Gettysburg

Supervisors, Managers & Team Leaders — Mr. Foreman is very proud of this particular program. As he says, “I’ve been at the Agency for 32 years, and last year was the first time we sponsored anything similar to a field trip for supervisory training.” The idea was to use the Battle of Gettysburg as a foundation for lessons learned from a leadership perspective. This fiscal year there will be another trip to Gettysburg, Pa., for 200 more supervisors and managers, and the plan is to provide this experience to all DCMA supervisors and managers.

“If DCMA is serious about establishing a leadership-centered culture, then the Agency needs to recognize accomplishments in leadership.”

Supervisory Training

Supervisors, Managers & Team Leaders — DCMA has been working to provide supervisory training to all supervisors, and they are looking to the Graduate School, USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) to provide that training. As a starting point, this year there will be a minimum of four courses offered.

Tier II Leadership Development Program

Potential Leaders — District East initiated this program in an effort to provide leadership training to individuals who had the desire to become leaders. Mr. Foreman’s group has taken the program and revamped it for Agency-wide use. The program, which would be required for all contract management offices (CMOs), will be locally instituted, managed and administered to give local management flexibility in addressing succession planning in their organizations. In addition, the local structure of the program should prove very cost-effective as travel costs will be minimized. Participants are expected to complete the program within three years (some may require less time and others additional time). Leaders will evaluate participants’ progress annually to ensure that they are provided with good learning opportunities and are in fact drawing from these experiences. By participating in the Tier II Leadership Development Program, employees position themselves for career opportunities throughout the Agency.

Central Development Program

General Workforce — This program is comprised of a list of leadership opportunities, programs and courses that DCMA funds and any workforce member can apply for. The opportunities are not limited to the topic of leadership — for example, technical and computer classes are also offered.

Recognizing Leadership

All levels — From Mr. Foreman’s perspective, “If DCMA is serious about establishing a leadership-centered culture and developing leadership competencies in our workforce, then the Agency needs to recognize accomplishments in leadership.” To do this, HR is working with the award committees to identify which awards could have leadership criteria built into them.

Leadership Career Guide

All levels — The major initiative that DCMA is pursuing as part of the Competency Assessment is building a leadership career guide along with a series of functional career guides. Mr. Foreman is working with DCMA’s Information Technology department to post the career guides on the HR home page. The operating premise is that employees will be able to go to one site for all career guides and leadership development information and opportunities. Both employees and management will be able to use these guides to develop their individual career paths and therefore better plan their careers.

With this myriad of leadership development programs, Mr. Foreman and his team have an ambitious schedule ahead of them. Mr. Foreman recognizes that implementing the components of the overarching strategy of making DCMA a leader-centered organization will take time. As he reiterates, “All of this is part of the cultural change that needs to take place within this organization, and change will be slow. Studies show that it usually takes five to seven years for a cultural change to take place, so it’s not something where we’re going to see overnight results.” Mr. Foreman believes that the key to making the change a success is the support of senior management. “If these leadership programs are to be accepted as a value-added enterprise, senior management has to be seen as an integral component,” he says. “Management needs to say, ‘This is where we’re going, this is our vision,’ regarding leadership development in the Agency.”