

Angela Bailey: HR's New Leader of the Pack



An interview with Ms. Angela Bailey, Executive Director for Human Resources, DCMA Headquarters, by Mr. Tom Gelli, Chief, Congressional Affairs, DCMA Headquarters

Ms. Angela Bailey is the Defense Contract Management Agency's (DCMA's) new executive director for Human Resources (HR). She comes to the job with 16 years' experience in federal personnel management, including stints in classification, position management and labor and employee relations. Most notably of late she headed the DCMA Transformation Team and played a key role in charting the Agency's path forward. Since coming to DCMA headquarters in July 2000, she has steadfastly endeavored to make DCMA an employer of choice. Outside the office, she and her husband of 20 years, Bruce, live in northern Virginia along with their son, Danny, and daughter, Sierra, their dog, Annie, and a neurotic tomcat named Butchiepoo. A native of southern Pennsylvania, she holds a bachelor's degree in leadership from Nebraska's Bellevue University. And don't be surprised if you see her straddling a Harley 883 Sportster in the next Rolling Thunder tour.

We recently sat down with Ms. Bailey to get a better idea of the person behind that big HR desk.

Q: The times they are a-changing, especially in the HR arena of federal government and the Department of Defense (DoD) in particular. Do you ever think that perhaps you have just waded into a violent whirlpool?

(Right) Ms. Angela Bailey (left), newly appointed executive director for Human Resources, with Ms. Cherie Taylor, secretary to executive director, Human Resources. (DCMA staff photo)

AB: No, not at all. Certainly these are changing times, but I think the turbulence is carrying us down a path of needed change, particularly in the HR field. For us, that will mean a keener focus on the customer rather than on policies and procedures. I expect that to result in better support to CMO [contract management office] commanders. I would prefer to characterize this period of transition not as turbulent, which suggests we have little control over things, but rather as exciting — exciting in that we have the opportunity to set our own course and shape our future. It's like being an entrepreneur with a start-up enterprise.

Q: As DCMA's mission responsibilities expand with no commensurate increase in resources, the HR



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management challenges become increasingly acute, particularly at the operational level. What must be done to blunt any adverse effects this may have on mission performance?

AB: I would say that HR must take a tactical as well as a strategic approach. In getting the tactical house in order, HR will be a key player in determining where the Agency stands in terms of on-board skills, competencies, certifications, educational credentials and so forth. We must see how our skill base matches up with our critical positions and the proficiencies needed to perform the DCMA mission. On the operational level, this kind of information can be extremely useful to CMO commanders, who must manage their personnel in a way that makes the best use of their skills and talents. On a strategic level, we need to help Agency officials and CMO commanders stay one step ahead in preparation for the Defense Department's future requirements. To this end, we in the HR community must expand our expertise beyond traditional personnel-management functions such as classification and position management and become more conversant with the technical fields of those we service.

Q: How will your recent experience as a prominent member of the DCMA Transformation Team benefit you in your new position?

AB: Perhaps the biggest benefit of being on the Transformation Team was

the ability to see across the Agency and gain a broad and fresh perspective of all that is going on. It gave me the opportunity to learn about operations, program support, customer relations, the budget community and strategic

planning. You have to look at HR from a system viewpoint. HR is part of the bigger system. It does not operate alone. I believe the broader view gained from my experience will translate into better-integrated, more far-reaching HR service and support for all organization components.

Q: And speaking of transformation, how will the new National Security Personnel System (NSPS) affect the DCMA workforce?

AB: First, let me say that the NSPS is a natural progression in the DoD transformation. DCMA is slated to go under the new system in July

2007, and I believe it will have a positive impact on us. For one thing, NSPS is right in sync with performance-based management. Not only are we negotiating MOAs [Memorandums of Agreement] with external customers, but under NSPS we'll be crafting agreements with our internal customers to specify *successful outcomes* the customers can expect. These internal agreements — between organizational elements and between subordinates and supervisors — will reflect what one party to the agreement will do to help the other party support its customers better. I believe it makes sense to go to a system that rewards you for producing desired results.

Q: What changes can we expect to see in the wake of the disestablishment of the District HR shops?

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AB: I think it’s a little misleading — at least from a functional standpoint — to say the services the District HR offices have performed are gone. We’ve simply consolidated our service locations. In doing our HR IPT [integrated product team], we looked at our entire HR organization and at each HR process and function to determine the best tack for accomplishing each one in terms of who will do it and where it will be done. So the functions are still being performed, but the chain of command has changed. We’ve eliminated layers of management, and we’ve reduced our HR personnel requirements by almost half by reengineering, redesigning and redistributing our processes and procedures. Admittedly, the dust hasn’t settled completely, but we’re getting there.

Q: It’s no secret the DCMA workforce is getting a bit long in the tooth. What do you advocate to attract and retain young talent?

AB: We have diverse ways of attracting young guns, and I’m not referring only to the Keystone Intern Program. But first I think it’s important to note that DCMA is by no means alone in this graying-workforce syndrome. It’s government-wide. I think the average age of today’s federal workforce is 51. Secondly, we must keep in mind that most individuals do not hit the door the day, month or year they reach retirement eligibility. Frankly, we’ve been hearing dire things about the human-capital crisis for a good 15 years, but we have plenty of applications and willing workers. The shrinking rolls are

more a reflection of budget cuts than birthdays. Nonetheless, we recognize that we must step up our recruitment efforts, and we are doing so.

Q: What can DCMA do to compete effectively with other federal agencies and the private sector for these prospects?

AB: It will be a challenge, but the good thing is that many young people today are not swayed by money alone. Many of them are looking for a work environment that allows them to team with others, work flexible schedules and give back to their communities, country and government. This cohort has been through 9/11 [and military operations in] Afghanistan and Iraq. As a Defense agency, we need to tap into these kids’ sense of patriotism and service to the Nation. We must showcase the unique opportunities DCMA has to offer, like working overseas and on cutting-edge aircraft and information technology projects.

Q: How far along are we with the BCA [Baseline Competency Assessment], and where are we going with it?

AB: We’re in the final lap of our BCA efforts. Once we have the final product, we’ll need to



(Above Right) Ms. Angela Bailey in her office at DCMA Headquarters. (DCMA staff photo)

“[DCMA HR] must see how our skill base matches up with our critical positions and the proficiencies needed to perform the DCMA mission.”

sit down with the CMO commanders and go over the results line by line, as one might do with a college transcript. We'll be identifying the competencies and certifications that currently exist among their staff, as well as the ones that are lacking, and the courses, programs and publications needed to achieve this end. The BCA is a useful tool, but it is not an end in itself. It is a starting point — a springboard, if you will — for a variety of more sharply focused human-capital initiatives some time down the road.

Q: You have an extensive academic background in leadership. What distinguishes a good leader?

AB: I just completed a fascinating leadership program that examined the evolution of leadership over the centuries. To a large extent, isn't leadership simply being a good person? And what is the definition of a good person? People display leadership in many ways, even when they're not in formal positions of leadership. They lead by example at all levels and irrespective of the size of the endeavor. I really think leadership is a combination of traits, characteristics and learned behaviors. And those ingredients are neither uniform nor set in stone.

Q: And what about your style of leadership?

AB: I think the one word that describes my leadership style is “balance.” I believe as a leader you must have your feet planted firmly in today, with your eye always on the future. I think there are four prongs to successful leadership: envision, plan, execute, and measure. It is fundamentally important for a leader to paint a vision for the workforce and to have everyone understand it. Next, you need a plan for accomplishing your

vision, and you have to understand that you are part of a system. You cannot forge out on your own in establishing your plan. Once you have a plan, you must be able to execute it. Otherwise it would be like showing up for a hockey game with all the best equipment and a top-notch game plan and not putting the puck in the net. And finally, you need to measure the results of your vision and plan. Did you achieve the results and outcomes your customer needed to succeed, or did you just create a lot of activity with absolutely no goal in mind?

Q: What books might we find on your nightstand? Anything by J.D. Pines?



AB: Oh, my. J.D. Pines is my pen name, under which I have one published novel, *Open Post*. It's a blend of military intrigue, political deception and criminal activity involving the Russian mafia. Available at your local bookstores and online for the bargain price of \$13.95. [laughter] Of course the heroine is a labor relations officer at an Army installation — so any parallels to actual persons or places are not totally by coincidence! I have three other writing projects in the works that I'll probably never finish now. I like military thrillers, mysteries and political suspense — Patricia Cromwell, Dan Brown, Tom Clancy and books of that ilk.

Q: We hear you own two motorcycles. Were you born to be wild?

AB: Although I probably shouldn't admit this, the truth is ... yes, I think I was born to be wild. On a motorcycle though, I'm more of an *easy rider* than a wild one, since I would like to live a long time. I'll go back to what I said earlier. It's all in the balance. There's a little of both in me.

(Above) In addition to her career in personnel management, Ms. Bailey also enjoys writing and has one novel, *Open Post*, published under the pen name J.D. Pines. (Photo courtesy of Amazon.com)