

Engineering and analysis pioneers interact with CMO systems engineers and specialists

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— Kellie Unsworth, Defense Contract Management Agency Systems Engineering Division acting director

In an unprecedented initiative, divisions and centers within the Defense Contract Management

Agency Engineering and Analysis Directorate have launched a variety of mechanisms that foster and encourage interaction between engineers and specialists at contract management offices and with Headquarters E&A staff. While the format for information exchange may vary among different E&A elements, the focus is a shared common goal of improved communication within the agency.

By means of an adjudication spreadsheet, Headquarters staff members in the Systems Engineering Division capture questions regarding surveillance planning, tools and training and post these questions to the portal.

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engineers on a more regular basis and through one-on-one exchanges, posting a consolidated question-and-answer log to the portal has improved our communication efficiency tremendously,” said Kellie Unsworth, DCMA SE Division acting director.

This first step for Q&As has resulted in a marked decrease in the duplication of questions being asked, according to Unsworth. “Pointed questions not currently contained in the Q&A log are still strongly encouraged, and updates to the portal Q&A will be frequent,” she said.

According to Don Jacobs, DCMA Manufacturing and Supply Chain Predictability Division director, “We have Manufacturing and Production Instruction Frequently Asked Questions on the manufacturing portal front page under the community projects.” This approach

is similar to the SE mechanism. The data largely comes from the Thursday Q&A telecon run by the Operations Directorate, but emails and personal interactions with CMOs are also included.

The Earned Value Management Center maintains a help desk that uses an application developed by DCMA Information Technology employees called IssueTrak. This application stores and retrieves Q&A data to ensure consistent responses.

The Software Center uses an email address, AskSAMI, to field questions, according to Gary Gumpright, DCMA Software Engineering Acquisition Management Center. Personnel from the SEAM Center monitor the system and ensure timely coordinated responses back to the field.





Defense Contract Management Agency Engineering and Analysis Systems Engineering personnel currently located at the Springfield, Va., DCMA headquarters, gather for a photo. From left, Jacob Pak, Keith Plourd and Ramlala Sinha. (Photo courtesy of Keith Plourd)

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These mechanisms allow E&A divisions to retain the rationale for policy decisions and interpretations and make the same knowledge available to engineers and specialists at CMOs who implement policy and seek guidance on surveillance plan execution and recording. The mechanisms also leverage E&A’s initiative to integrate policy, tools and training to make engineers’ and specialists’ jobs much easier.

This initiative has great potential for thwarting unnecessary and time-consuming phone conversations while keeping Headquarters staff members honest and consistent in their

interpretation and counsel concerning Contract Administration Service activities.

“Our key focus upon publication of the SE policy was CMO customer service and support. As we have strived to assist the field during implementation of the new policy, the importance of providing clear and consistent guidance, regardless of who within HQ SE is asked, has only been achieved through disciplined processes. Posting coordinated Q&As to the portal supports this goal,” Unsworth said.

“Our Headquarters E&A folks stand ready and willing to continue to engage with CMO staff members through our

unique communication mechanisms as well as through emails and telecons as we continue to work through policy implementation and integration across the E&A functional areas. We within E&A are all about teamwork as we jointly continue to evolve DCMA’s capability toward better efficiencies and greater effectiveness,” said Gordon Kranz, DCMA E&A Directorate director. 

Q. With the announcement of the new SE instruction, I went off to the policy section of the SE portal page and found two documents that seem to be instructions. One is an HTML page — “Systems Engineering Surveillance Instruction.” This only displays in (Internet Explorer) and, when printed out, does not contain any title page or indication as to what it is, just the words. And the other is a Word document released Sept. 30, 2010, — SE Surveillance Planning, Execution and Documentation. Which is supposed to be the new instruction? Need an answer on this one as soon as possible as we in the field are supposed to be planning this activity starting today.

A. “The Systems Engineering Surveillance Policy/Instruction” can be accessed by clicking on “Systems Engineering Surveillance” under “Instructions” on the DCMA homepage. It can also be accessed by clicking on the “A Link to SE Surveillance Policy” on the SE portal. The documents provided under “SE Policy” are for supportive guidance.