

# An expanding community of practice: Moving quality ahead

Patrick Tremblay | DCMA Public Affairs

**I**n Northern Virginia this summer, a small group of leaders gathered to talk about

how they make the quality products sold to the Department of Defense.

The full-day meeting was remarkable for two reasons. First, in the room were top people from many of the country's largest competitive contractors, sitting together with senior DOD acquisition personnel, and alongside trade group representatives. Second, up for discussion wasn't what is being produced, nor how much it's going to cost, but rather how the group can further industry quality assurance efforts.

The group calling itself the DOD/ Industry Quality Assurance Council was meeting for the first time, the result of several years of work by the Defense Contract Management Agency's Quality Assurance Directorate and Michael E. Shields, Jr., its executive director.

"The question for me when we set up the Quality Assurance Directorate at DCMA was 'how do we establish a community of practice and expand it out?'" said Shields, who chaired the group's inaugural meeting. "First, how do we establish this community of practice in terms of DCMA, then how do we expand out to include the government, standards bodies and industry?"

Lockheed Martin hosted the first gathering, a role that will pass among the organizations over time. "DOD and industry share a common interest here," said Steven Hill, vice president of quality at Lockheed Martin. "We all want to produce the highest quality products affordably, and this council can help us cut out waste without increasing risk. Our warfighters deserve nothing less."



1) More than two dozen senior quality assurance leaders prepare to meet for the first time for the Department of Defense/Industry Quality Assurance Council Sept. 13 in Arlington, Va. The council includes representatives from DOD organizations and major contractors, and focuses on ensuring quality goods and services are produced for the department. (Photos by Patrick Tremblay, DCMA Public Affairs)

2) Tatia Evelyn-Bellamy and Christopher Brust, both with the Defense Contract Management Agency's Quality Assurance Directorate, participate in a group discussion during the first meeting of the Department of Defense/Industry Quality Assurance Council, Sept. 13 in Arlington, Va.

3) Gary Wegrzynowicz, (left) deputy executive director, Defense Contract Management Agency Quality Assurance Directorate, and Kenneth Pates (center), quality assurance director, DCMA Operations, speak with Eugene Jaramillo, senior director of quality at Raytheon, during a break-out session during the inaugural meeting of the Department of Defense/Industry Quality Assurance Council, Sept. 13 in Arlington, Va.





Steven Hill (left), vice president of quality, Lockheed Martin, and Michael E. Shields, Jr., executive director, Defense Contract Management Agency Quality Assurance Directorate, talk prior to the start of the first meeting of the Department of Defense/Industry Quality Assurance Council, Sept. 13 in Arlington, Va. (Photo by Patrick Tremblay, DCMA Public Affairs)

Facilitated by Beth Clark, a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt, the group was led through three activities designed to clarify the council’s charter and refine strategic objectives, leading to a short list of projects. “We want the projects identified at the end of the day to be SMART,” Clark told the group. “In the Six Sigma world, that means specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and having a timeline.”

Shields invited senior manufacturing quality representatives from the nation’s largest defense contractors. In addition to DCMA, the public sector was represented by quality personnel from the Missile Defense Agency, Naval Sea Systems Command, Naval Air Systems Command, the departments of the Army and Air Force and the Office of the Deputy

Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Shields and his directorate have worked over the past few years to strengthen DCMA’s quality focus (see Evolution of Quality in the Communicator’s summer 2012 issue). About one third of DCMA’s workforce is dedicated to making sure goods and services meet the level of quality outlined in contracts. They report to their contract management offices, which in turn report to the Operations Directorate. Richard H. Fanny, DCMA deputy chief operations officer, participated in the meeting to ensure the two directorates were in synch.

“We need to remember that there are three parts to what we do, and they are integrated,” said Fanny. “There’s the engineering side, the quality side, and ultimately the contract side, which sets

the requirements for what we expect. If those three don’t line up, we’re in trouble. So, we need to make sure what we put forward here can be supported from the engineering and contract side, as well as the quality side.”

Another key participant in the meeting was Paul Borawski, chief executive officer of ASQ, one of the top quality trade groups. His organization provides support to groups that develop and approve U.S. and international standards, and offers 17 professional certifications in quality management.

“Every three years, ASQ does a study called the Future of Quality. This meeting fits right in the center of our most recent findings, because the biggest opportunity for you to collectively benefit your organizations lies in the space between

your organizations,” Borawski told the council, adding he was “excited by the prospect of what can be achieved by this group.”

ASQ’s participation was complemented by that of the Defense Acquisition University, represented by Kurt Stonerock, dean of DAU’s College of Contract Management. “I think DAU clearly recognizes the importance of this group,” said Stonerock. “I really appreciate the invitation to allow us to see how we can align our enterprise to best support everyone here.”

At the end of the day, the group had identified a number of projects for immediate and future effort. For many participants, however, the degree of participation in the council’s first meeting was the most important part.

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— Richard H. Fanney, Defense Contract Management Agency deputy chief operations officer

one meeting, I think can achieve a lot,” said Eugene Jaramillo, Raytheon’s senior director of quality. “I look forward to participating and continuing to support.”

Kevin Schilling of Boeing agreed. “This was remarkable. In my opinion, if we just got this far, it’s been a success.”

Shields said he was thrilled to see the first meeting being held. “I think this

council has the potential to do some really great things,” he said. “We have a golden opportunity here to move the nation’s quality assurance program ahead leaps and bounds. This is a vehicle for us to make a big difference.”



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