CREATING SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ONE PROGRAM AT A TIME

LOGSA Builds its Reputation as Friend, Not Foe, to PMOs

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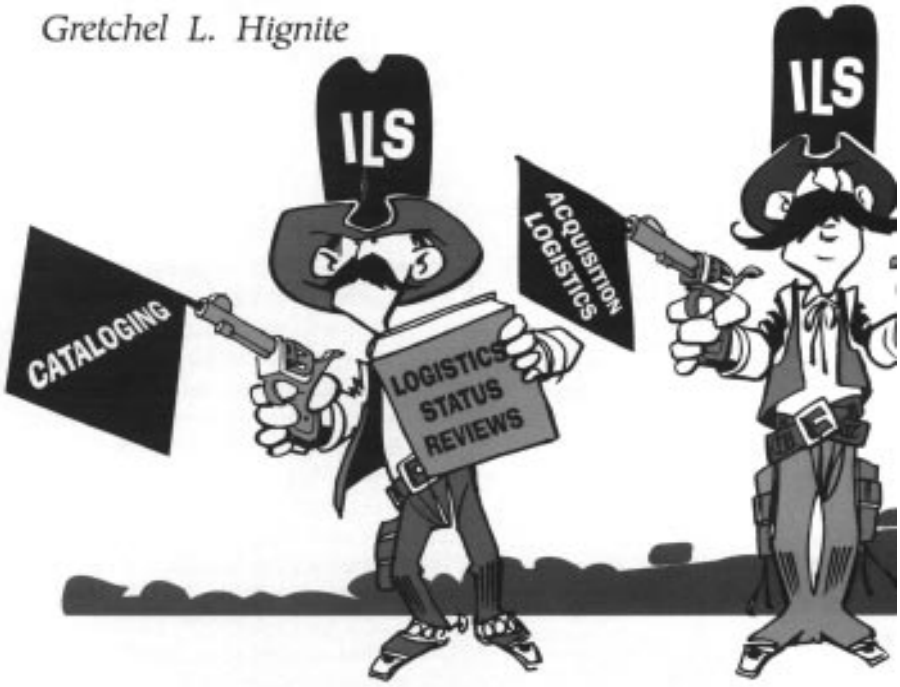

Lt. Gen. William H. Forster encouraged members of the Army Acquisition Corps to be risk takers in a speech presented at the Army Acquisition Career Management Workshop, September 15-17, 1993. He is quoted in the January-February 1994 issue of "Army Research, Development and Acquisition Bulletin" saying, "It's time to be bold, imaginative, inquisitive and do it right the first time."

Evolution

The U.S. Army Materiel Command (USAMC) Logistics Support Activity (LOGSA) Acquisition Logistics Center (ALC) implemented that advice before it was given. Our change was evolutionary. In the early 1980s, LOGSA ALC (formerly, the USAMC Materiel Readiness Support Activity, Readiness Division) was a premiere USAMC evaluator of acquisition logistics.

In many circles, we were a "black hat" organization. The "black hat" label was earned unintentionally by our personnel when we performed logistics status reviews and fielded systems reviews for Headquarters, USAMC. Our research abilities, combined with knowledge and skills in acquisition logistics, cataloging, provisioning and supply support, allowed us to locate deficiencies in integrated logistics support (ILS) elements and determine the probable cause. We documented our findings in a formal report and briefing that was presented to the program manager (PM) or major subordinate command (MSC) prior to presentation to USAMC. Seeing deficiencies identified in a formal report developed for USAMC did not endear us to most PMs, thus the "black hat" label. Our reviews became equated to visits by the Office of the Inspector General. We were there to assist them, they were glad to see us, but even happier to see us leave.

Although part of our mission was to review and report on the status of developmental and fielded systems, we did not enjoy the "black hat" label and offered various PMs our assistance in correcting their problems. Our offer was looked at with some

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We were the good guys there to help them, but they thought we were a "black hat organization" there to cause trouble.

skepticism for several years, but in 1986, a PM finally accepted our offer.

In 1986, we started our evolution by assisting the PMs, Advanced Field Artillery Systems and Armored Family of Vehicles (AFV), develop their logistics requirements. One of our current managers acted as the AFV ILS manager early in the systems life cycle. The evolution from evaluation to assistance had started.

While we were evolving from adversarial relationships to partner relationships, we were also moving from a workforce of equipment specialists with in-depth knowledge of equipment and one to two years of college to a workforce of logisticians with B.A. degrees, plus graduate work. The workforce change was necessary because our work requirements were changing. We no longer needed personnel with in-depth equipment expertise as much as we needed personnel with writing and analysis skills in order to accomplish the various studies that had become significant to our mission.

Our skills, abilities, and knowledge requirements had changed over time. This, coupled with an inability to recruit because of the Army rightsizing effort, drove us to rely more heavily on acquiring qualified personnel through the School of Engineering and Logistics (SEL) Intern Training Program, Red River Army Depot, Texas. Interns did not affect our end strength immediately, and they had received significant training. Thus, the SEL Intern Training Program was considered an exceptional resource for our personnel requirements. Most of our interns had B.A. or B.S. degrees and some had M.A. or M.S. degrees. Once we had acquired personnel with basic logistician skills, we improved their skills with further process-specific training.

The Winds of Change

When the 1990s arrived, we were in a position to ride the winds of change, and our management thrived on the chaos that came out of rightsizing and base realignment and closure. We were positioned as experts in logistics management and kept that edge through innovation. We developed an artificial intelligence, personal computer resident program — designated the Logistics Planning and Requirements Simplification System (LOGPARS) — to write logistics planning and requirements documents. The evolution of that system is ongoing, and it is being used by all Services and other federal agencies. We also updated the Department of Defense (DoD) logistic support analysis process and trained visitors from other nations and other U.S. agencies in the process. When our opportunity to work with PMs as a partner came, we were ready; and, from the outset, our support was a significant success.

Successful Entrepreneurship One Program at a Time

In December 1989, we were presented a unique opportunity to provide acquisition logistics assistance to the PM for signal warfare (SW). The opportunity was unique because one of our core missions always had been evaluation of acquisition logistics after its implementation by a PM. In this instance, the PM SW asked us to participate in the initial development of the PM's acquisition logistics requirements and supplement the PM's core ILS managers as consultants or primary ILS managers. We developed a Memorandum of Agreement, and the PM provided funds by Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request. In the first year, we provided one man-year of support.

Opportunity In Chaos

Significant changes were being made in the DoD in the early 1990s,

and organizations were being ordered to rightsize. Because of the rapidity of changes, it seemed as if chaos reigned at times. However, our management understood there is opportunity in chaos and, uncharacteristically for government agencies, decided to move the emphasis of our activity from evaluation to program support based on the success of the PM SW assistance program. At this point, our effort was fledgling, but our vision was future-oriented. We adjusted our mission statement, developed a business plan and vision, and instilled in our employees that we were looking for opportunities to support PMs and major Army commands (MACOM).

The PM, Night Vision and Electro-Optics, our next customer, was brought on board in August, 1991, after they were unable to obtain needed assistance from other sources at a reasonable cost. They could choose our assistance or the assistance of a civilian contractor. The PM evaluated our cost vs. the cost of a contractor and determined we were less expensive. He then determined we were significantly more flexible in meeting changing needs of the PM office, since we could negotiate and implement actions without negotiated contract modifications. Due to the ease of doing business with us, compared to a contractor, we had our second customer. After the second customer, our growth in customer support activities was significant. We now have additional Army, Navy, Special Operations Command, and International Cooperative Program Office customers, and others.

Management Strategy

Our strategy is to evolve as a management activity and become capable of providing management services to any organization. However, we learned from observing commercial management consultants that it is impossible to have every management skill desired by a potential customer on board at all times. Instead, we must warrantee our services to the customer if they will provide us the opportunity to learn new skills as we progress. For near-term projects, we may need to hire term personnel knowledgeable of a process, such as an annuitant, or a person with special skills, such as an interpreter.

In early 1992, we were afforded an opportunity to test the theory that we could provide most management services that required writing and negotiation. In our evolutionary process, one of our employees was asked to assist the PM, Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Reconnaissance System (NBCRS) by writing documents and negotiating services with the Federal Republic of Germany. The Chemical Biological Defense Command International Program Office did not object; therefore, after some discussion about the process, we agreed to assist the PM. Since then, we have almost completed negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany for the acquisition of logistics support for the "FOX" NBCRS. The LOGSA may participate in future logistical support efforts and cooperative configuration management of the "FOX" NBCRS through the year 2014 and beyond. We take significant pride in our success with the "FOX" program. It is used as an example for our last theme in this article — An example of "Success Through Process-Specific Training."

Defining Reasons for Our Success

The success of the ALC evolution from adversary to partner was the bold, imaginative vision of our managers and the education, experience and process-specific training of employees. At the right time, and in the right place, our managers moved us from the role of evaluators to the role of partners. They instilled the vision of quality support in their employees and empowered them to market services to prospective customers. In addition, ALC employees were well-educated, dedicated and experienced in acquisition logistics; thus, when they were empowered to seek out new opportunities, they were successful in the effort.

An Example of Success Through Process-Specific Training

The LOGSA was offered the opportunity to participate in an International Cooperative Program Office project, April 1992. We accepted the opportunity based on an up-front agreement that we would be afforded the opportunity to learn as we worked and attend process-specific training at Defense Systems Management College (DSMC), Fort Belvoir, Va. LOGSA assigned two exceptionally capable action officers to the program, and they were provided information and guidance. They also attended the Advanced International Management (AIM) workshop, DSMC, Fort Belvoir, Va. The AIM workshop provided a step-by-step laydown of the International Cooperative Program process.

As LOGSA ALC action officers moved through the various processes in achieving a successful acquisition of products and services from the Federal Republic of Germany, they followed the process taught in the AIM workshop. By following the process exactly as taught, and applying a significant amount of personal time to the project, they assisted the Program Manager, International Program Office (PM/IPO) in developing the concept and program management plan for establishing a cooperative logistics support international agreement between the United States and Federal Republic of Germany.

The LOGSA PM support team developed specialized program management documentation, such as the international agreement and formal requests for authority to negotiate and conclude the international agreement for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Another document developed by the LOGSA team was a project industrial base factors analysis. This

described the project's overall net effect, benefits and losses on the U.S. defense industrial base, and a Technology Assessment and Control Plan, which provides a technology security risk assessment of sensitive information identified for potential transfer.

One of the most crucial functions performed by the LOGSA PM support team was staffing the formal international agreement and requests for authority to negotiate and conclude. This was an area where our past experience in the staffing process was extremely beneficial. However, the process-specific training our action officers received at the DSMC AIM workshop was an enabling factor in performing the staffing task quickly and efficiently.

We estimate the knowledge gained at the AIM workshop enabled us to reduce the time required to develop and staff the "FOX" international cooperative program documentation by 6 to 9 months when compared to the widely accepted norm of 24 months. In addition, the AIM workshop instructors provided additional consulting services to our action officers as they encountered new situations requiring assistance, experience and knowledge of players in the international arena.

The LOGSA, ALC's PM support team, received a significant vote of confidence from the PM when they were selected as members of the U.S. negotiating team. That confidence proved to be well-placed during the negotiations, because the LOGSA PM support team used skills acquired through various process-specific training courses to play a significant role in developing U.S. negotiating strategy, and provided key international technical and managerial support during the formal negotiations in Bonn, Germany.

Summary

The LOGSA, ALC's PM/IPO support team, was so successful with the "FOX" NBCRS that USAMC IPO provided the LOGSA IPO with additional tasking and endorsement in support of MACOM IPOs when support is needed or desired. The LOGSA ALC emphasis is on customer service, so any project, large or small, will be discussed with a "can do" attitude. Our organization will make every effort to meet a customer's management needs, whenever possible.

The LOGSA is an exceptionally versatile organization with a vision of unparalleled customer service as our objective. We are willing to discuss mutually beneficial opportunities with multiple organizations, and we consider ourselves to be international experts in the management of logistics. If you have a need you would like to discuss, you may contact the author by telephone at (205) 955-9913 or the Chief, Acquisition Logistics Center at (205) 955-9873. You may also write to the Executive Director, USAMC Logistics Support Activity, ATTN: AMXLS-AE, Redstone Arsenal, Ala. 35898-7466.

MAKING THE "PROFESSIONAL CONNECTION"

In a December 20, 1993 letter to Brig. Gen. Claude M. Bolton, Jr., Commandant, Defense Systems Management College, Mr. James W. Dee, Functional Director, Job Referral, National Contract Management Association (NCMA), reiterated his commitment to assist job-seeking candidates and prospective employers in making the "Professional Connection." Excerpts from his letter follow:

In June 1989 NCMA initiated the Job Referral Service (JRS). The JRS strives to connect individuals looking for a job with those employers trying to fill a position. The goal of the program is to find a good match for employees and employers alike. How much does it cost?

For a job-seeking candidate and NCMA member, the JRS is free! Nonmembers pay only $70.00 The candidate's application and resumè remain on file for six months and are referred to all employers with suitable job openings. For a nominal fee of $295.00 per position, an employer's job opening is listed with the JRS. Our NCMA staff employment coordinator then matches the position requirements against 300 to 400 current resumès in our database. For three months, employers can receive all of the resumès that meet the specifications required. The JRS sounds like a great program, but does it work?

Yes, and the program continues to grow gradually and solidly. The service receives 50 to 75 new or renewed registrations from job candidates each month, and 6 to 10 position registrations. Since January 1993, the JRS has registered 94 positions and 750 candidates. While not all employers report job placements, 14 placements have been confirmed this year. The JRS works for the candidate, the employer, and NCMA. In addition, the JRS is a source of non-dues revenue that helps us maintain member benefits.

To learn more about making the "Professional Connection" or to discuss the JRS in more detail, please contact Ms. Marie Schlegel, NCMA Employment Coordinator at 1-800-344-8096 or 1-703-448-9231.