EXECUTIVE COURSES REFLECT IMPACT OF ACQUISITION CHANGES

Gaining New Insight into Our Environment

Robert L. Tate

Three significant events are shaping the changing horizons of acquisition. These include acquisition workforce professionalization, industrial base downsizing, and Defense Management Review implementation.

Consider acquisition workforce professionalization. Training to achieve it is beginning to have the desired impact on program management and, more particularly, the program manager (PM). With an increasing number of program offices being staffed and supported by personnel achieving at least level one certification throughout the acquisition functional areas, some program offices have increased their effectiveness and eased the issue of training. Consequently, PMs can leave many of the less-significant issues behind and move forward and upward to new, higher plains of achievement.

Perry Smith, author and CNN commentator, autographs his books for DSMC students as part of the distinguished guest lecturer series.

All Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) executive courses provide opportunities to gain new insight into the acquisition environment. Current policy, initiatives and challenges are explored, including their impact in today's challenging management organization. The integration of business skills with executive leadership competencies prepare the executive for the demanding challenge of leading the changing organization.

Mr. Tate is Director of Executive Courses, Executive and Short Courses Division, Defense Systems Management College.

Executive Refresher Course

Responding to the changing role of the PM, the focus of the Executive Refresher Course (ERC) has moved to a higher plane. This is in response to a number of issues including the fact that the Army now includes the ERC as a pre-command course for product managers as well as PMs.

Ms. Janice M. Menker, ERC Director, has instituted some significant changes. One focuses on the role of leadership as compared and contrasted to management. While attend-

ing the Program Management Course (PMC), ERC participants focused on management and particularly program management. Program management as defined by the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) and implemented by the Department of Defense (DOD) is included as a functional discipline. The PMC usually has one distinguished guest lecturer specifically devoted to the topic of leadership; e.g., Perry Smith (noted author, CNN commentator during Desert Storm, and retired Air Force major general).

From left: Dr. Robert F. Delaney, Media Consultant; Janice M. Menker, Executive Refresher Course (ERC) Director; and ERC students.

Photos by Richard Mattox

The ERC focuses on program management as a fully integrative aspect of leadership, and different leadership applications and styles to the acquisition business are examined and utilized. Each participant selects a book from among the many leadership books in the DSMC library for an in-session report to their fellow participants. While the report focuses on the author's view and message and its applicability to the acquisition business, the most significant aspect of this exercise is not the book report but how the author's ideas can be synthesized with our individualized style and circumstances and applied to our responsibilities in the workplace.

Executive Management Course

The other executive-level course, the Executive Management Course (EMC), is also for colonel/captain and GM-15. However, the EMC serves an entirely different need and focus. Oriented for the non-PMC graduate, the EMC provides an executive-level integration for the DAWIA individual not in the DAWIA PM track. Moreover, this is probably someone who will never be a PM. These functions have been described as matrix or functional support to a program office.

The EMC is also an ideal course for persons at the executive level who are coming from operational billets and entering into positions peripheral to, but not directly in, acquisition and program management. The Army utilizes the EMC to bring their TRADOC system managers (TSMs) current so they can work effectively and contribute with the system PM counterpart.

Dr. Robert F. Burnes, EMC Director, has capitalized on this changing environment to institute new capabilities and provide new direction for the EMC. For example, Dr. Burnes worked with several organizations to develop a new management simulation, Food Corporation, to replace the long-standing Looking Glass simulation. While Looking Glass tended to focus on team activities, Food Corporation emphasis is on individual evaluation and insight. The Food Corporation simulation has been fully tested and is included regularly in the EMC.

Another area of emphasis relates to industrial base issues, downsizing and defense conversion while furthering the concept of partnering. Because of their functions and experience, many participants have had little or no opportunity to understand their industry counterparts. Full exploitation of industry participants in each offering has enhanced understanding of government and industry acquisition roles. At least one local area factory tour is scheduled. To date, Beretta, Accokeek, Md.; Westinghouse, Baltimore-Washington Complex, Md.; IBM, Manassas, Va.; and the Navy facility at Indian Head, Md., have been visited. In addition, other locations are examined and evalu-

ated constantly to determine their applicability for our purposes.

Few EMC participants have had interaction with the fourth estate. This lack of understanding or awareness of media's role and the influence that perceptions play in the policy- and decision-making process inside the Capitol beltway indicates another area which needs to be included for EMC participants. To sharpen that awareness, an EMC offering usually includes a one-day media session at the National Press Club. These sessions include a lecture/discussion period on the media's role in formulating national defense policy. In conjunction with these sessions, a panel of four members of the working press with an acquisition background generally is included. The panel discussion heightens the awareness of media's perception of the acquisition business.

Executive Management Course students.

Course Enrollment Allocations

An issue for ongoing process improvement concerns the difficulty in enrolling in executive course offerings when, in fact, some seats are still available. This is analogous to an airliner leaving the gate with an unsold seat — a valuable resource gone forever. On numerous occasions, we were informed about potential participants being denied a class position after being told that the Service quotas either had been fully allocated or were no longer available.

We are defining and refining the fill process as well as determining how and why the current system broke down. We do know that because the executive courses are nonmandatory, those involved in the fill process pay less attention to accomplished or actual fill rates. Recognizing that at least an interim fill process fix for all the executive courses must be devised and implemented, DSMC will rethink the advantage of, and necessity for, waiting for the current system to fill executive courses when experience indicates that probably will not occur at the same rate the mandatory courses are filled.

The Executive Courses Department will assist in filling all executive courses. Approximately one, and possibly as early as two weeks, before the expected start date of any executive course, the Executive Courses Department will become proactive in placing fully qualified individuals into the course.

If you have been told that enrollment is closed, that may not be the case. However, course quality will not be allowed to suffer by accepting less-than-fully qualified participants, nor jeopardized by a less-than-reasonable balance between components, agencies and industry.

Call the applicable executive course director at (703) 805-3316 for assistance in determining the possibility of attending the course of your choice.

Dr. Robert F. Burnes, EMC Director, reviews an exploded diagram of the Beretta handgun with students. Beretta is a frequently toured industrial facility.