



You're the Judge

In this column, we feature cases that center on an ethical dilemma and invite you to be the judge.

Some of the cases involve agencies outside DoD, but the issues they present are equally applicable to the defense acquisition community.

Demetris Johnson was employed in the administrative office of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Geological Survey. Her official responsibilities included purchasing office supplies and services using a government-issued credit card. Between October 2000 and March 2001, Johnson received approximately \$500.00 in retail gift coupons from a vendor from whom she ordered supplies for the government. These she used to buy personal items.

You're the judge:

Is it okay for Ms. Johnson to take advantage of this commercial practice, or does she have an ethics problem?

The verdict is on page 47.

The Solution: Balance and Common Sense

As an Air Force officer, I was taught never to bring a problem to my boss without bringing a solution. A process-driven organization can be excellent if the following suggestions are integrated as a part of the organizational culture. The suggestions all work together to build an attitude and a "process" (if you can accept that term here) that make strong processes work.

The first is tailoring the processes. That is the capability to adjust processes based on certain parameters, such as the size, type, or length of the project. Tailoring deletes certain requirements that are not appropriate—for ex-

ample, lengthy, complex plans for a short, simple project. My previous employer, SRA International, a CMM-I level 3 company, had an excellent tailoring process for use when setting up projects and project requirements. The different parameters were set in a spreadsheet. When you checked the right size, type, and length of the project, the first level of tailoring was automatically applied. Then the PM, in conjunction with his boss, made any other tailoring adjustments required. The final result was a list of required actions and products. It worked very well. While something that complex is not necessary in many cases, the idea of tailoring processes is.

The second is flexibility. By this, I mean that processes should be guidance and not necessarily set in cement. PMs and their people should have the ability to bypass or modify some processes in certain cases. This is not a license for the PM and his people to do what they want when they want; the departure from a given process should be approved by the overall manager (or at least he or she should be aware of deviating) and coordinated with those involved. An example might be an emergency engineering change proposal. It might go through an abbreviated process that would still include testing, but some of the other process steps would not be required. There are many other examples. In cases where there are going to be frequent deviations, a modified process could be developed, publicized, and implemented.

"Always change processes and structures while they still function" is a quote from that famous PM, Anonymous. The best idea is continuous improvement. All processes should be reviewed periodically. Don't wait until the process breaks. Change and streamlining for improvement should be ongoing. Circumstances change. Requirements change. Funding changes. The people involved change. Any of those could generate a change in the processes in a project. Processes that are based on "because we've always done it that way," may or may not be worthwhile and should be considered for change. Also looking at others' processes for best practices can lead to change.

The bottom line is to search for balance and common sense. Admittedly, common sense can be *uncommon* and sometimes hard to find. There need to be processes—good, strong, repeatable processes that work. The processes need to be tailorable, flexible, and continually improved. Processes can be the salvation of a PM, but they can also be a dagger to the heart if they are poor or structured so that they negatively impact the project.

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."

Sir Winston Churchill

The author welcomes comments and questions. Contact him at rwturk@aol.com.

You're the Judge: The Verdict (from page 16)

Not only does Ms. Johnson have an ethics problem, but she also violated the law. Instead of finding a supplier with the lowest price or best quality, which would have benefited the government, she selected the supplier that gave her a kickback.

Johnson pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of violating 18 U.S.C. 209, unlawfully accepting supplementation of her government salary. She was sentenced to two years of supervised probation, 100 hours of community service, and a \$25.00 special assessment.

What the law says:

18 U.S.C. 209 (Supplementation of Salary) prohibits federal officers or employees from receiving any salary, or contribution to or supplementation of their salary, from private sources as compensation for their services to the executive branch or to an independent agency. It also prohibits the payment of any salary, or contribution to or supplementation of salary, to a federal officer or employee under circumstances where its receipt would be a violation.

This ban on outside compensation for government work is designed to keep outside interests from intruding on the federal government's ability to create and manage its programs independently; and to avoid conflicts between the receipt of such compensation and the employee's duty to make decisions in the public interest, in order to ensure that the employee's sole loyalty is to the government. In other words, it prohibits an executive branch employee from serving two masters by receiving compensation from an outside source to perform official duties.

Nerves ...

If you get nervous, you are not alone. But nervousness isn't all bad.

Nervousness releases adrenaline, increases your heart-beat, and directs your blood flow to your vital organs. The increased body temperature, the increased flow of adrenalin, the increased heart rate, the shallower and faster breathing, the tense muscles are all things that happen to the professional athlete—and they create a force of energy. This force can either empower and infuse you with dynamic energy, or debilitate and devastate you. Think of nervousness as being primed, energized, and mobi-

lized. It's been said that the trick is to get the butterflies to fly in one direction.

And Practice

A man approaches a New York City taxi driver and asks, "How do I get to Carnegie Hall?"

"Practice, practice, practice," replies the taxi driver.

Practice probably doesn't make perfect, but it certainly helps. Don't memorize or you'll sound as if you're giving a canned presentation, but be very familiar with the points you're going to make and the flow of the presentation. Then try it out. And again.

But it's not just a matter of the one presentation. A study conducted at the Weatherhead School of Management of Case Western Reserve University by Professor Jan Wheeler found that the people who wanted to change and develop skills were best served when they practiced their new skills in many venues of their lives. Hence, you need to apply your public speaking skills on all fronts of your life and look for opportunities to speak in front of others.

Toastmasters Inc., an international organization that, in addition to other goals, helps people develop their speaking skills, is an option. It is "the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality." The Web site at www.toastmasters.org lists clubs based on zip code.

Never Underestimate the Power of Words

According to the ancient Greek adage, "When Demosthenes speaks, the people say, 'My, what a wonderful speaker he is,' but when Pericles speaks, the people say, 'Let us march!'"

When Churchill was granted U.S. citizenship, John Kennedy said, "Winston Churchill mobilized the English language and sent it into battle." And the historian Arnold Toynbee in 1948 concluded that Churchill's wartime speeches spelled the difference between survival and defeat for Britain.

If you apply Aristotle's rules of rhetoric—verifying and testing the Ethos, Pathos, and Logos of your presentation—and if you hone your delivery with practice, you may not make people march, mobilize a language, or save a nation, but you'll make a presentation that states your position with clarity and strength and keeps your audience's attention.

The author welcomes comments and questions.
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