OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICER

GSA Acquisition Workforce Forum

--Informing the GSA acquisition workforce on the latest acquisition news and events!

EDITION FOUR
SUMMER 2004

Reichelt Interviewed in Federal Times

In his new role as GSA's Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO), Chief of Staff Karl Reichelt was interviewed in the June 28 edition of the Federal Times. When asked what was the toughest issue at the moment, Reichelt said, "The work we are doing in terms of integrity and ethics in acquisition is overwhelmingly important." He also added, "We believe we will set a legacy of compliance, ethics and integrity here at GSA for doing the right thing."

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Been There, Done That*
- *FACE Highlights*
- *QC Demystified*
- *Green Cleaning in Great Lakes*

From the Desk of the Editor
by Judy Steele

This edition is packed with interesting and informative articles so be sure to make it part of your "summer reading." Recent procurement scandals have brought the issue of ethics and integrity to the forefront. Addressing the goal stated by our new CAO, this edition's SPE Corner on "Loyalty" and last edition's on "Integrity" tie in with an article on the history of procurement scandals by Richard J. Bednar, "Been There, Done That." In these challenging times, education and professional development of the acquisition workforce has never been more important. The recent Federal Acquisition Conference & Expo (FACE) was a great training and networking opportunity. We hope you were able to attend. If you are interested in professional development, the Office of the Chief Acquisition Officer is offering paid memberships to NIGP. Increasing your expertise on the Internet is also important. The new

"Usability University" is a training program that offers a variety of user experience training opportunities. Education also occurs through exchanging ideas with procurement staff from other countries as the recent meeting with the South Korean Procurement Delegation demonstrates. Learn more about Quality Control in "Quality Standards Demystified," our first offering from FTS. And be sure to keep up to date by checking out our usual columns on the FAR, GSAM, PBS Acquisition News, Green Acquisition, JWOD, and "Check It Out!"

We welcome any comments, suggestions and articles for the newsletter. The "Forum" is here to meet the needs of the GSA acquisition community and we can't do that without your input! We also welcome any individually authored articles on acquisition issues that would be of interest to the GSA acquisition audience. Please contact the Editor, Judy Steele, at judy.steele@gsa.gov or (202) 501-4994 with comments or suggestions.

Been There, Done That by Richard J. Bednar [1]

There and That

There was a time during the 1980s when government contracting was widely publicized as being synonymous with corruption and inefficiency. That publicity washed over and stained both government contractors and Department of Defense (DoD) procurement personnel. This was the Reagan era—the best of times and the worst of times. President Reagan's vision was to build up our national defense capability to an unprecedented level; to overwhelm the Soviet threat and to defeat it. This meant huge outlays for defense, especially ships, aircraft, tanks, and other weapon systems. For defense contractors, these were good times.

Almost concurrently, these were the worst of times. Along with record expenditures for defense procurement came reports of corruption and inefficiencies, both inside and outside the Pentagon. From the outside came offers of gratuities and bribes, offers of important industry jobs, payments for procurement information, rigged bids, illicit exchange of classified documents, and other manipulative devices to capture defense contracts. From the inside, there were enough unscrupulous procurement executives to make it work.

It is fair to say that for some defense contractors a perception existed that the corporate culture was to pursue whatever tactic was necessary to fatten the bottom line. It is also fair to say that some government procurement officials became willing participants, looked the other way, or lacked the courage to take on the corruption apparent to them. As a consequence, even before the law enforcement apparatus went into full gear, the public and Congress lost confidence in the defense industry and in those within government entrusted to protect the public interests.

By the spring of 1985, half of the top 100 defense contractors were under criminal investigation. "Operation Ill Wind," the largest procurement fraud investigation in the history of our nation, headed by Henry Hudson, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, involved thousands of investigators, including the FBI and the DCIS, and assistant prosecutors. Eventually, over ninety contractors and individuals were convicted of felonies stemming from this scandal. [2]

In the summer of 1985, President Reagan established the President's Blue

Ribbon Commission on Defense Management (the "Packard Commission," Executive Order 12526, July 15, 1985). In the course of its comprehensive work, the Commission heard from many witnesses who demanded more government oversight, more penal laws, and more regulation of the industry. The Commission, however, recognized that excellence in defense management could not be mandated by more laws and more regulations. Instead, the Commission wisely concluded that Government should foster and encourage contractor self-governance.

Excellence in defense management will not be achieved through legions of government auditors, inspectors and investigators. It depends on the honest partnership of thousands of responsible contractors and DoD, each equally committed to proper control of its own operations.

The Commission recommended that the industry develop self-goverance programs. Nevertheless, statutory and regulatory controls over procurement, especially defense procurement, were stiffened. [3]

Based on the Packard Commission's recommendation regarding proper internal controls, and on the industry's own perception that confidence in the industry could be regained only by embracing and practicing values-based compliance, a group of 18 senior defense contractor executives met, pondered, and adopted six ethical principles [4] that became the Defense Industry Initiative on Business Ethics and Conduct (DII) (www.dii.org). That leading industry group, which now numbers about 50, and includes nine of the top ten defense contractors, has faithfully implemented the principles over

the past nearly 18 years.[5] The DII Principles have endured because practice has proven they do promote sound management practices, ensure ethical conduct in compliance with procurement regulations and standards, and serve to maintain DoD and public confidence in the industry. DII has demonstrated over the years that self-governance can work, such that when an isolated act of business misconduct occurs within a DII company, the integrity of the company itself (and the defense industry as a whole) is not called into question.

Let's Not Go Back
"There and That" was nearly 20 years ago. Now, again concurrently with increased government procurement, we read about serious ethical and compliance lapses in the industry and fears of a deterioration in the proper, arms-length relationship between industry and its government contracting partners. Confidence in government procurement officials, government contractors, and in the defense contracting process has been shaken; some wonder whether we have forgotten the lessons of the past.

However, there is reason to believe that conditions today are improved, and that the recent headline scandals do not signal a return to the wide-spread government procurement abuses of the 1980's. Evidence of such improvements rest upon the expectations, even the demands, of the public, the government and investors of responsible corporate self-governance and ethical business conduct. There are many manifestations of this heightened expectation. The original DII principles have steeled the DII signatories to a firm and consistent commitment to ethical business

conduct, which is regarded as more than "the right thing to do." The DII companies view this commitment as adding to the bottom line in terms of the resulting trust and confidence by investors, customers and suppliers. There are distinct linkages between the 1986 DII principles in the 1991 U.S. Sentencing Commission Organizational Guidelines [6] which established elements of an effective compliance program; in the expression of Contractor Standard of Conduct in the DFARS [7]; in the FAR provisions relating to mitigating factors for contractor debarment [8], and even in the most recent Federal legislation dealing with corporate governance – the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 [9]. The Securities and Exchange Commission [10] regulations additionally recognize that corporate codes of ethics should include standards to promote honest and ethical conduct. In the same theme, the Deputy U.S. Attorney General's January 31, 2003 memorandum [11] singles out the role of management as an important factor in determining whether to prosecute a corporation: "….management is responsible for a corporate culture in which criminal

> "Excellence in defense management...depends on the honest partnership of thousands of responsible contractors and DoD."

conduct is either discouraged or tacitly encouraged."

What all of this means is that more decision makers in government and in responsible government contractors have gotten the message. There is broad agreement that ethics, both as conduct and culture, matters; that self-governance works where regulation alone does not work. Regulation works only in conjunction with a culture of commitment to integrity.

We are in a time when the current administration seeks to provide greater competition with the private sector to perform functions inherently commercial in nature. We work in a time where our national security is threatened. To meet and defeat this threat, the government and government contractors need to trust each other. That trust can blossom and endure only if each side regards the other as an ethical contracting partner. We need to work together to nurture that regard and to make it justifiably placed.

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[1] Mr. Bednar is a former Army Chief Trial Attorney; he now practices law with Crowell & Moring LLP in Washington, D.C. He also coordinates the Defense Industry Initiative on Business Ethics and Conduct ("DII") activities. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Crowell & Moring LLP or the DII.
[2] Andy Pasztor, When the Pentagon was for Sale: Inside America's Biggest Defense Scandal, (New York, Scribner, 1995)
[3] Among these new constraints: the 1986 DOD Voluntary Disclosure Program; the 1986 Amendments to the Civil False Claims Act; Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act and the Anti-Kickback Act of 1986.
[4] Have and adhere to written Codes of Conduct; Train employees in those Codes; Encourage internal reporting of violations of the Code, within an atmosphere free of fear of retribution; Practice self-governance through the implementation of systems to monitor compliance with Federal procurement laws and the adoption of procedures for voluntary disclosure of violations to the appropriate authorities; Share with other firms their best practices in implementing the principles, and participate annually in "Best Practices Forums"; and Be accountable to the public.

5 The current DII Signatories are identified on www.dii.org.

6 The Guidelines and Supporting commentary may be found at www.ussc.gov.

7 48 C.F.R. §203.7001.

8 48 C.F.R. Subpart 9.4.

9 Pub. L. No. 107-204, 116 Stat. 745 (2002)

10 68 Fed. Reg. 5110, 5118, 5129 (January 31, 2003)

11 "Principles of Federal Prosecution of Business Organizations", http://www.usdoj.dag/cftf.

"FAR-Cited" by Jerry Zaffos

Question: We issued a solicitation in which we notified offerors that the Government intends to make award without discussions. After the receipt of offers, one of the offerors submitted a revised proposal. Are we now prevented from making award without discussions?

Answer: FAR 15.001 defines a proposal revision as "a change to a proposal made after the solicitation closing date, *at the request of or as allowed by a contracting officer*, as the result of negotiations (emphasis added)." Further, FAR 15.303(c)(2) states that the contracting officer shall "control exchanges with offerors in accordance with 15.306." Finally, FAR 15.306(a)(2) states that, " If award will be made without conducting discussions, offerors may be given the opportunity to clarify certain aspects of proposals (*e.g.*, the relevance of an offeror's past performance information and adverse past performance information to which the offeror has not previously had an opportunity to respond) or to resolve minor or clerical errors."

A recent GAO decision is on point. The Government issued a solicitation informing offerors that the Government intended to make award without discussion. In correspondence clearly marked as "Clarification Request, the Government asked the offerors a series of questions. In response to the request for clarification, an offeror submitted a revised proposal. The Government did not evaluate the revised proposal. The offeror protested. In denying the protest, GAO noted that the offeror "could not and did not transform the agency's clarifications into discussion." (ANTECH, Inc., B-293582, April 13, 2004.) You can find this decision at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/gaodecisions/search.html.

Consequently, you do not have to evaluate the unsolicited revision and you can proceed to make award without discussions.

If you have any questions about the FAR including where the FAR covers a specific topic, please send them to the Editor to be answered in the next edition of the newsletter.

What's New with GSAM!

The Winter 2004 edition of the Acquisition Workforce Forum contained an article that focused on the need to make the GSA Acquisition Manual (GSAM) "more applicable to the commercial marketplace while maintaining its integrity and maintain it

at a level where all agency acquisition personnel can rely upon it with complete confidence." We are beginning to realize that goal through a series of actions that include reformatting the GSAM into both HTML and PDF versions, making it user-friendly and revising the GSAM to reflect the reforms, technology-driven changes, and competition requirements for acquisitions that are promoting new ways of doing business in the Federal government. These changes are largely the result of comments and suggestions provided by GSA's acquisition workforce.

The following upcoming changes will serve to ensure that GSA's procurement actions are processed with the highest degree of transparency and integrity:

- Requiring all members of GSA's acquisition workforce to register in ACMIS;
- Requiring Contracting Officers' Representatives (CORs) to register their education and training in the Acquisition Career Management Information System (ACMIS);
- Modifying existing policy on obtaining deviations to the FAR and the GSAM;
- Providing GSA contracting officers and contractors, acting under a utility service contract, with specific guidance regarding the resolution of disputes involving tariffs and tariff related matters; and
- Modifying GSA's debarment and suspension procedures to give parties being considered for debarment an additional period to informally respond to such considerations.

Some revisions and improvements should be completed within the next few months - other actions will take longer. Our challenge in updating the GSAM is not based on speed, but ensuring that GSA's acquisition processes, policies, and procedures are effective, can be applied fairly, and ensure public trust. To meet this challenge and succeed, acquisition workforce members intimately involved in the award and management of contracts are the best source for information and advice. You are encouraged to continue to contact Ernest Woodson at (202) 501-3775 or e-mail him at ernest.woodson@gsa.gov with questions, concerns, or suggestions for improving the GSAM. Your questions/concerns are important and are welcomed!

Federal Acquisition Conference & Expo (FACE) a Huge Success!

We hope you were able to attend one of the sessions of this year's Federal Acquisition Conference & Expo (FACE). The Virginia session, held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City June 2-3, 2004, started off with a Keynote Address by Robert Burton, Associate Administrator, OFPP. He discussed the issues OFPP is focusing on this year including human capital, competitive sourcing, small business issues, and e-Gov. Over the next six years, 64% of the Federal acquisition workforce will be eligible for retirement, so human capital

issues were a frequent topic at the conference. Getting sufficient training for new employees in a time of budget constraints is also of concern. The passage of SARA and elevation of the role the Federal Acquisition Institute plays should address this. The afternoon Plenary Session had an invigorating discussion of the "Future of Acquisition" moderated by Corey Rindner, Procurement Executive from the State Department. Senior Procurement Executives discussed such questions as "Is full and open competition dead?," and "Is the FAR in—or FAR out?" The second day was kicked off by a rousing speech from Congressman Tom Davis of Virginia's 11th District. Dee Lee, Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy led an interactive lunchtime discussion. FACE was a great venue for networking, hearing the latest on acquisition issues at breakout sessions and seeing the latest vendor offerings. Over 700 attended the Virginia session and 170 attended the session the following week in Dayton, Ohio. If you didn't attend this year, be sure to catch it next year!

Join National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) Now!

These are challenging and exciting times for acquisition and supply functions. Over the past few years, the public sector acquisition workforce has had to adjust to challenges in staffing levels, workloads, and the need for new skill sets. Reforms are requiring the acquisition workforce have a greater knowledge of market conditions and industry trends and a new set of skills focusing on business management and the use of independent judgment and initiative. The key to success is in professional education, access to precise technical information, and networking with colleagues so our contracting workforce can upgrade its skills and abilities continuously.

As part of its ongoing efforts to address skill gaps and to foster the professionalism development of its acquisition workforce, the Office of the Chief Acquisition Officer has obtained an appropriate number of agency memberships to the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP). These agency memberships are available to program offices without additional cost on a first come, first serve basis. NIGP is a professional association of Federal, State, and Local Government Buyers that provides its membership with education, research, technical assistance and networking opportunities in public purchasing. For more information on NIGP, check out their website at www.nigp.org. If you are interested in membership for your program area, please contact Beverly Cromer at (202) 501-1448 or beverly.cromer@gsa.gov. The Office of the Chief Acquisition Officer also purchases agency memberships to the National Contract Management Association (NCMA). At this time, all have been claimed. We will advise you if more NCMA agency memberships become available.

Usability Solutions at GSA

Use of electronic methods to communicate with the Federal government is on the rise, according to a May 2004 report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project. Although the telephone is still the number one way to contact the government, using a government website is now the second most frequently used approach. The most recent Pew study shows that approximately 77 percent of Internet users—an estimated 97 million Americans—have gone online to search for information from government agencies or to communicate with them.

An earlier Pew Internet survey, performed in 2002, showed that 20 percent of government website users were frustrated in their attempts to find information, and frequent surfers did no better than less active surfers. Since then, many agencies—including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Social Security Administration, and the Internal Revenue Service—have been actively studying ways to improve the "usability" of their sites so that even more people may communicate effectively with them via the Internet.

So what is usability? Usability is the measure of the quality of a user's experience when interacting with a product or system—whether a website, a software application, mobile technology, or any user-operated device. Because many Federal web-based communication systems have similar audiences, goals, and issues, it makes sense that GSA has formed the Usability Solutions

> "Check us out at www.usability.gov/ usabilityuniversity/training.html"

Group to provide a governmentwide forum for discussing, developing, and sharing web-based communication issues and best practices.

Led by Janice Nall, who developed www.usability.gov while serving as the Chief of the Communication Technologies Branch at the National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute, GSA's Usability Solutions Group recently launched the Usability University (UU). UU is a comprehensive usability training program that offers Federal staff and contractors a variety of user experience training opportunities, such as free seminars and in-depth courses, at nominal rates.

Usability University, which is jointly sponsored by GSA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, offers a range of seminars and courses for nominal fees. The seminar "Older Users and the Web" will be offered July 19-20 from 9:30-3:30 at AARP, 601 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. To register for this course, and for further information about usability or other specific programs, go to www.usability.gov/ usabilityuniversity/training.html or contact Hada Flowers at (202) 208-7282 or hada.flowers@gsa.gov.

GSA Hosts Korean Procurement Delegation

On April 19 and 20, 2004, David Drabkin, Deputy Chief Acquisition Officer, hosted the second bi-lateral meeting between GSA and the Public Procurement Service, Republic of Korea in Williamsburg, VA. This meeting was a continuation of the cooperative exchange between GSA and the South Korean Public Procurement Service. Previously, employees of the South Korean Public Procurement Service worked at GSA and Mr. Drabkin traveled to the Republic of Korea for the first bi-lateral meeting in December 2003.

The purpose of this meeting was to exchange information about government procurement. Notably, officials from the Korean procurement delegation presented information on its United Nations award-winning e-procurement system; and GSA presented information on its Multiple Award Schedules program and workforce competency assessment tool. GSA associates Matthew Urnezis, Teresa Sorrenti, Neal Fox, Gloria Sochon, and Al Matera were guest speakers at this meeting. Among those present from the South Korean Public Procurement Service were Hyung-Jong Min, Director General, Planning and Management Office, Jae-Bo Ryu, Director, Procurement Policy Division and Myeong-Ki Baek, Director, Information Planning Division. Future bi-lateral meetings are being scheduled with the Republic of Korea to focus on education and training and GATT Compliance. The next meeting is scheduled for August in Seoul, South Korea. GSA is also investigating opportunities for other bi-lateral cooperative exchanges with our NAFTA partners, Canada and Mexico. For more information, contact Barbara Plevelich at (202) 219-3454 or Barbara.Plevelich@gsa.gov.

Public Building Service (PBS) Acquisition News

The PBS Procurement Division, PXRP, is presently transitioning to Organizational Resources as the Vendor Acquisition Division—PGCA. Currently the Division Director, Matt Urnezis, and three analysts have been assigned to the division. Other placements are expected to follow soon. For more information, contact Barbara Bartee at Barbara.bartee@gsa.gov or (202) 501-1824.

Quality Standards Demystified
by Harry Blake

There is no questioning the economic benefit of a properly designed and implemented Quality Control (QC) system; however, many people who interact with and use QC terminology don't understand it. The intent of this article is to clear up some common misconceptions about QC and explain the underlying fundamentals of some of the current in-fashion terminology.

This is relevant to the acquisition community for the following reasons:

1. With the recent publicity regarding some of the acquisition practices alleged to have occurred at GSA, it would be a good idea to have more proactive (instead of reactive) procedures in place. A high quality, accurate and valid QC system is a great start.

2. When making vendor selection decisions, acquisition staff must consider quality as one of the deciding factors. By understanding the

fundamentals behind the quality "buzzwords," acquisition team members can better compare competing proposals, as well as determine that proposed solutions meet applicable requirements.

3. By understanding and implementing QC concepts, Contracting Officers and Contracting Officer Technical Representatives can improve their performance monitoring contracts.

The History Behind Today's Quality Movement

Since the concept of the "marketplace" first began, customers have always demanded quality goods. "Quality" is not a modern concept. For the purposes of this article, quality in "modern" times will be defined as post-Fredrick Taylor's "Scientific Management," a body of theories developed in the early 1900s. One of the most important figures in the history of QC is Dr. Walter Shewhart, who is considered by many to be the "grandfather of Quality Management." When he was a Bell Lab engineer, Dr. Shewhart was credited with developing the process of Statistical Process Control (SPC). According to NASA, SPC is a "method of monitoring, controlling and, ideally, improving a process through statistical analysis" (www.hq.nasa.gov/office/hqlibrary/ppm/ppm31.htm).

No discussion of QC would be complete without discussing the ideas of Dr. Edwards Demings. As a physicist and statistician Demings built upon Shewhart's work to create sampling techniques that were used for the first time for the 1940 U.S. Census which proved to be very effective. For example, after routine clerical operations were brought under statistical process control, some processes increased in productivity six-fold. This success led to Demings' teaching Statistical Quality Control (SQC) techniques in 1942 to engineers and others engaged in the World War II effort.

After WWII, most of American industry abandoned the QC efforts developed by Demings and Shewhart because demand for American goods was so great and these methods were viewed as a function of engineering, not management. Dr. Demings was sent to Japan and while there was asked by the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers to teach Shewhart's SPC to aid in their country's industrial rebuilding effort. He agreed to do so, but unlike his previous lectures in the United States, he aimed his message this time to the chief executive level. His message was that improving quality would reduce expenses while increasing productivity and market share. Deming's message was well received and use of his techniques helped make Japan an industrial power.

While Dr. Demings was prominent in Japan, for all intents and purposes he remained anonymous in the United States. This changed in the 1980s as America became more concerned with increasing industrial competition from Japan. Dr. Deming's influence spread and he was featured in an NBC documentary titled "If Japan Can, Why Can't We?" Today there are many new buzzwords and concepts in QC but the principles for these theories were developed by Dr. Demings and his predecessors. Some of the new concepts are:

QC Terminology: Six Sigma, ISO 9000, and Maturity Models

Six-Sigma, created at Motorola and made famous by its use at GE, is at its heart nothing

more than using statistics as a control. Six-Sigma can most easily be thought of as the use of six standard deviations for "statistical controls." In statistics a standard deviation (SD) measures how far an occurrence of a random process is from the average or mean. In a "normal" distribution curve, three sigma (+/-3 SD) covers approximately 97.73% of the population. If three sigma is acceptable quality, then there will be less than 3 errors per 1000 actions.

In the 1980's Motorola engineers decided that the traditional quality levels — measuring defects in thousands of opportunities — didn't provide enough "granularity" since 97.73% error-free still allowed for 2700 errors per million actions, which could have great financial ramifications. While credit for coining the term "Six-Sigma" should go to Motorola engineer Bill Smith, "Six-Sigma" is just +/- 6 SD or 99.99985% (control) which only allows 1.5 defects per 1 million actions. To account for any variation in measuring, slack is figured into the number, often a 1.5 Sigma shift which yields 99.99966% or 3.4 defects per million (making 6 Sigma the process 4.5 SD) *(www.isixsigma.com/)*.

ISO 9000. The International Organization for Standardization [ISO] is the world's largest developer of standards. ISO is made up of a network of standards institutes (i.e. ASME, IEEE, etc.) from approximately 148 countries. The majority of ISO standards are technical in nature. ISO exists because of the importance of interoperability and agreement on terms in industry. Billions of dollars of commerce can hinge on standards adopted by industry (either de facto or ISO). "Standards-wars" often erupt between different companies with varying technical solutions as they each try to make their way the standard way of doing things. Because of this, ISO

standards are often compromises instead of the best solution. This point is extremely relevant in the quality arena, because in 1987 ISO decided to create a "generic management system standard" which became what we know as the ISO 9000 family. ISO 9000 is, therefore, not the industry "best practice" rather it is the lowest common denominator all parties involved would agree to.

"The concept of certification and standards, however, breaks down when global competitiveness is at stake. Most recently, ISO 9000 certification has become a requirement for exports to Europe, and Japan has been forced to obtain ISO certification, not because it is a quality issue, but because it is a way of increasing market share. The Japanese companies provide some of the highest-quality products, typically using company product standards (best commercial practices) rather than external standards like QML or any U.S. military standards" (www.wtec.org/loyola/ep/c6s1.htm).

This fact can easily be illustrated by looking at Toyota and Firestone. Toyota, who abandoned the ISO 9000 standard, is at the pinnacle of quality control, while the Firestone plant which was responsible for the greatly publicized Ford-Firestone tire incident, was an ISO 9000 certified plant. There is an old joke among QC engineers/experts regarding the ISO 9000 standards. It involves a company using cement instead of foam to manufacture its life preservers, yet it is still able to become ISO 9000 certified as it follows all of its documentation to the letter. Though a little extreme, it points out a vital flaw in many QC initiatives.

Maturity Models. The latest craze on the QC scene is Maturity Models. Currently over 30 Maturity Models are being promoted. The first Maturity Model was created by the Software Engineering Institute (SEI). SEI, affiliated with

Carnegie Mellon University, is a federally funded research and development center sponsored by DoD. SEI's purpose is to promote software engineering, a term first used in the late 60's to bring the rigor found in traditional engineering disciplines to computer science. One could argue that if our buildings and automobiles failed as often as our software, we would be living with the Flintstones in Bedrock.

SEI and its Maturity Models were highly influenced by Philip Crosby. "Dr. Deming and Dr. Joseph Juran were the great brains of the quality revolution. Where Phil Crosby excelled was in finding a terminology for quality that mere mortals could understand" (www.isixsigma.com/). Crosby's easy to understand terminology may help explain the craze surrounding Maturity Models. SEI originally created the Maturity Model terminology for software but it is being used everywhere, for everything.

The following graph and definitions are from an SEI model for software projects found at www.sei.cmu.edu.

Maturity Models are often broken down into five levels:
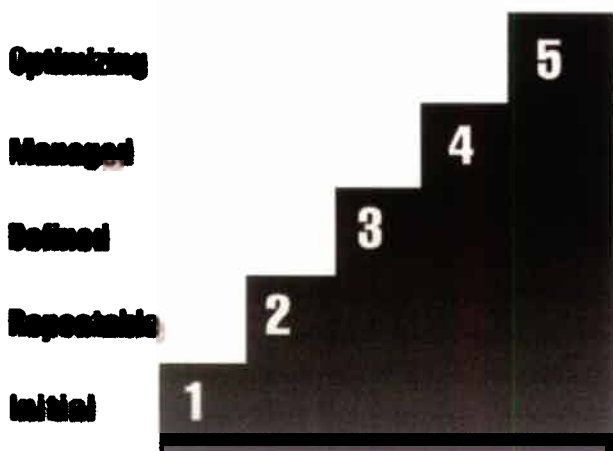
1) **Initial.** The software process is characterized as ad hoc, and occasionally even chaotic. Few processes are defined, and success depends on individual effort and heroics.

2) **Repeatable.** Basic project management processes are established to track cost, schedule, and functionality. The necessary process discipline is in place to repeat earlier successes on projects with similar applications.

3) **Defined.** The software process for both management and engineering activities is documented, standardized, and integrated into a standard software process for the organization. All projects use an approved, tailored version of the organization's standard software process for developing and maintaining software.

4) **Managed.** Detailed measures of the software process and product quality are collected. Both the software process and products are quantitatively understood and controlled.

5) **Optimizing.** Continuous process improvement is enabled by quantitative feedback from the process and from piloting innovative ideas and technologies.

SEI stresses how their model's framework could be used in other areas besides software development. SEI is developing an Acquisition module for their well-known Capability Maturity Model® Integration (CMMI®). This module, which helps define "effective and efficient practices for government acquisition organizations," should be of great interest to the government acquisition community. The module can be found at www.sei.cmu.edu/

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By no means is the CMMI® Acquisition Module a direct "How To" guide, as every group and organization is different. Instead, it is best thought of as a well-designed checklist even if your organization, section or group is not actively seeking a formal appraisal (ranking against the Maturity Model). I highly recommend benchmarking it, to ensure that you have in place, and in practice, relevant repeatable processes and procedures. If not, create them or change what you have, always remembering common sense often does not mean common practice.

From a basic standpoint, Maturity Model levels (CMMI® Acquisition Module included) can be best thought of yielding increased quality performance with fewer risks.

Certification, Registration and Accreditation

Many people are surprised to find out that certification, registration and accreditation in some of the different commercially available "quality standards" are not the same thing nor does an organization have to be any of the above to put these quality principles into practice. According to ISO definitions found at www.iso.org:

Certification: refers to the issuing of written assurance (the certificate) by an independent, external body that has audited an organization's management system and verified that it conforms to the requirements specified in the standard.

Registration: means that the auditing body then records the certification in its client register.

Accreditation: refers to the formal recognition by a specialized body - an accreditation body - that a certification body is competent to carry out ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certification in specified business sectors. In simple terms, accreditation is like certification of the certification body.

Certificates issued by accredited certification bodies - and known as "accredited certificates" – may be perceived on the market as having increased credibility, whether they do or not. It is important to remember that great quality control systems can be in place without any of the three. Toyota is a prime example of this. On the other hand, just because a company is certified or accredited, don't assume that their QC processes are perfect. Validation of their QC can be done with market research.

Understanding the history and fundamental concepts behind QC systems should make it easier to reap the benefits of Quality Control systems. Knowing these concepts will help us to understand when, how and what metrics should be put in place to yield much greater results than focusing on the latest trends and buzzwords. Achieving a cutting edge Quality Control system in a large or small organization may also require supplementing a basic understanding of statistics with more sophisticated concepts like prospect theory and theory of constraints. For more information on QC standards and terminology check out www.isixsigma.com/, www.asq.org, www.iso.org, and www.sei.cmu.edu.

The author, Harry Blake, is a Project Manager at SmartBuy. He welcomes any comments on this article and can be reached at harry.blake@gsa.gov.

contracting officers. In 2003, GSA's Office of Procurement pronounced the Great Lakes Region's efforts "the most sophisticated" of GSA's regions, and the Director of the Office of Solid Waste at EPA headquarters requested copies of their regional forms and procedures in an attempt to improve implementation of green purchasing programs across the Federal government.

One area where the Region has chosen to focus on green purchasing is housekeeping. With about 60 janitorial contracts and 47 different contractors cleaning approximately 16,179,783 square feet, regional associates thought they could make a significant impact on the environment and the well being of their tenants by "greening" their janitorial contracts.

In 2001, the Regional Environmental Coordinator collaborated with the regional Contracts Services Branch team leader for the regional janitorial program to revise master contract specs. They recommended that contractors use low-VOC (volatile organic compound) cleaning products and report annually on their progress. A reporting form was developed for contractors that asked questions such as, "Has your company implemented an environmentally preferable purchasing program?" and "Did you require the use of low-VOC cleaning products in any work subcontracted out by your company?" and "Over the past year, which of the following low-VOC cleaning products did you purchase?" This list of low-VOC products includes carpet and upholstery cleaners, spot removers, fabric protectant, floor wax strippers, general purpose cleaners, general purpose degreasers, glass cleaners, metal polishes and cleaners, and furniture waxes and polishes. California state limits are given as guidelines for VOC content since they are the most stringent.

Green Cleaning in the Great Lakes Region

The Great Lakes Region has taken GSA's Affirmative Procurement Program seriously, making a concerted effort to develop procedures, contract specifications, checklists, reporting forms, and training programs for all regional associates, especially those targeting project managers, property managers and

These two regional associates had previously modified the master cleaning specs to include the EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG) requirements for purchasing such items as restroom paper products and plastic trash bags with the prescribed amount of recycled content. Now they wanted to take the green cleaning program a step further, convinced by research which shows that using environmentally preferable products improves air quality and has less of an impact on the health of janitorial workers and building tenants than using traditional products.

These associates realized that the impact of contract requirements could be tremendous due to GSA's significant market influence through the practices of its contractors, the size of GSA operations, and since most of GSA's janitorial contractors also clean privately owned buildings. In addition to recommending low-VOC products, an optional requirement for HEPA or micro-filter vacuums was added. After modifying the specs, the program team leader trained the contracting officers and property managers who work with the janitorial service companies as the contracting officer's representatives on site.

Although the Great Lakes Region's green cleaning program was in place on paper by 2002, property managers encountered resistance from contractors who did not want to bother experimenting with new products or changing suppliers. Additionally, many of the property managers were uncomfortable in the role of salesmen trying to convince their janitors to buy into something that they were not convinced of themselves.

In the summer of 2002, the Regional Environmental Coordinator heard of a NISH workshop on green cleaning coming to Chicago, targeting janitorial contractors. She attended it, free of charge, and was so impressed that she asked the NISH national trainer if he would put on a similar workshop for GSA regional associates. He was thrilled to do so, and conducted the training in January 2003 for 60 regional associates from four of the region's six states as well as a couple of the region's cleaning contractors, at no cost to GSA. Teaching with the NISH trainer was one of the country's foremost experts on green cleaning, Steve Ashkin of the Ashkin Group. As former owners of janitorial businesses with years of experience in the industry, both instructors really clicked with their audience. The GSA team leader for janitorial contracts, Regional Recycling Coordinator, and Regional Environmental Coordinator backed them up with information about all of the Federal mandates and agency policies that support the green cleaning movement.

After this training, Steve Ashkin reviewed the regional master janitorial specs and helped the Great Lakes Region refine them, suggesting language such as, "Use products that meet the Carpet and Rug Institute Green Label Program," and specifying floor finishes "free of heavy metals, including zinc." He was pleased to see the annual report on low-VOC product use that the region required of our

contractors. The Contracts Services Branch put the green spec on its website for easy access by all regional associates.

Inspired by the NISH training, several of the Great Lakes Region's property managers have convinced their janitorial contractors to try environmentally preferable and biobased content cleaning products in the region's Federal buildings and courthouses, as shown in the following examples:

- Columbus, Ohio, Bricker Federal Building: EnviroCare neutral disinfectant, glass cleaner, all-purpose cleaner, and washroomcleaners are used.

- Chicago's Customhouse: pilot test using only micro fiber cloths—no spray products or dusters—in one particular office.

- Chicago's Customhouse: pilot test in a restroom, where different types of cleaning products are used on three adjacent stalls, three basins, and three mirrors. Traditional products are used on one stall, basin and mirror, while two different manufacturers' green products are used on the other two sets of fixtures. Tenants, alerted to the test by a posted sign, have told the property manager that they like the idea of switching to healthier products.

- Detroit, Michigan, McNamara Federal Building: contractor has expanded use of green products, using Green Seal certified items. Property managers have educated building tenants about them at their regular meetings and are planning an informational kiosk.

The above are just a few examples of the Great Lakes Region's efforts. Implementing these programs has proven to be difficult. One property manager said, "It's a struggle getting it implemented. We have good discussions, but when the time comes to implement, the understanding is different. Only half the materials are there, or half the research is done."

Resistance to change is nothing new, but the Great Lakes Region is fighting resistance with persistence! Training is ongoing: In 2003, the Regional Environmental Coordinator trained approximately 180 regional associates in Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, and Grand Rapids, Michigan in GSA's Affirmative Procurement Program. The Contracts Services Branch team leader for janitorial contracts works continuously to educate the region's property managers on green purchasing. The region has conducted continuous, comprehensive training that has inspired some of their property managers to sell their janitorial contractors on the idea of buying greener products—a practice which is likely to spread to their private sector contracts.

For more information on this article contact Marianne Kaiser at (312) 353-3632 or Marianne.Kaiser@gsa.gov.

Meet GSA's JWOD Representatives! By Annemarie Hart-Bookbinder

Felipe Mendoza, Associate Administrator, Office of Small Business Utilization, is the Presidential appointee representing GSA on the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, the Federal agency that administers the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. As one of the JWOD Program's largest customers through products sold through FSS, and services procured by PBS, GSA's representation on the Committee is a strong asset to both the JWOD Program and its Federal customers.

The Committee is comprised of fifteen Presidential appointees including representatives from eleven Federal agencies and four private citizens representing the concerns of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. In addition to GSA, Federal agencies represented on the Committee include the Departments of the Agriculture, Air Force, Army, Commerce, Defense, Education, Justice, Labor, Navy and Veterans Affairs. The Committee's responsibilities include determining the suitability of products and services to add to the JWOD Program's Procurement List and setting the Fair Market Price for those products and services.

Mr. Mendoza's appointment in July of 2003 allowed him to be a part of the Committee's Strategic Planning process for the JWOD Program for Fiscal Years 2004-2007. The JWOD Program's Strategic Plan centers on five goals relating to people with severe disabilities, Federal customers, process and procedures, communication and information sharing and market development. In regards to Federal customers, the JWOD Program's goals include increased customer satisfaction and the creation of collaborative plans to help better meet Federal customer's unique business needs.

The JWOD Program is also supported at GSA through the assistance of the JWOD Program Liaison, Lucy Jenkins, a Program Analyst in the Office of Small Business Utilization. As GSA's JWOD Liaison, Ms. Jenkins provides GSA procurement and acquisition personnel with the latest guidance and information on the JWOD Program and its ability to meet GSA requirements. Ms. Jenkins can be reached at (202) 501-1445 or via email at lucy.jenkins@gsa.gov.

Check It Out!

"Check It Out!" highlights upcoming conferences and events of interest to the GSA acquisition community. If you'd like to have your conference or event listed in this column, please send an email to the Editor, judy.steele@gsa.gov with the pertinent information and a point of contact.

NIGP 59th Annual Forum and Products Exposition
"Set Sail for Success"
August 7-11, 2004
Beau Rivage Resort and Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center
Biloxi, MS

Contact: (800) FOR-NIGP x 227 or x 251 or www.nigh.org/Events

SPE Corner
by David Drabkin

Last newsletter I wrote about three words I try to live by: Integrity, Loyalty and Fun. I addressed the need for integrity in everything we do. It's importance in what we do daily cannot be over emphasized. We've recently seen examples where some of our colleagues gave away their integrity, and, unfortunately, we may see more in upcoming months.

I'd now like to focus on the need for loyalty in everything we do. Loyalty is subordinate to integrity. Anyone who asks you to sacrifice your integrity out of loyalty to him/her or the team does not understand the true meaning of loyalty. If you give away your integrity you cannot be loyal to yourself or to your team. Loyalty does not require blind support to either your supervisor or team. Loyalty does demand that you provide the best advice and work you can. Loyalty also demands that if you are being pushed to do something illegal or unethical that you not do it and bring it to the attention of the appropriate authorities. Loyalty also demands that just because you disagree with a course of action, and after you have given your supervisor or team the benefit of your advice and insights, you honor the decision that is made and do everything within your power and skills to make it happen elegantly.

The members of our acquisition workforce are imbued with special trust and authorities. No

one else can obligate the government to spend taxpayer dollars or make a decision about the responsibility of a company. Combining your personal integrity with your loyalty to yourself, the team, and GSA demonstrates that special trust and the proper use of the authorities you have been delegated. In the end, the government cannot operate and the taxpayers will be ill served without your personal commitment to having integrity in everything you do and being loyal to yourself, your team and GSA.

> "Loyality.. demand (s) that you provide the best advice and work you can."

This newsletter is issued by the new Office of the Chief Acquisition Officer. The creation of this office and its implementation within GSA marks a historic move forward in recognizing that members of the acquisition workforce are more than mere clerks. We serve an important function in facilitating the fulfillment of the requirements of our customers in consonance with the rules, using good business judgment.

   We are ready to make this move and we look forward to your support in the process.

Mr. Drabkin is the Senior Procurement Executive and Deputy Chief Acquisition Officer, Office of the Chief Acquisition Officer.

We thank our guest authors for their contributions to this newsletter. Guest authors express their own views, which are provided for the information of our newsletter readers.

We welcome any comments, suggestions, and articles. We also welcome any individually authored articles on acquisition issues that would be of interest to the GSA acquisition audience. Please contact the Editor, Judy Steele, at judy.steele@gsa.gov or (202) 501-4994 with comments or suggestions. Questions for the "FAR-cited" column can also be submitted to the Editor.