

Approach to information technology boosts performance

By Gino Magnifico
Army Contracting Command

As the chief information officer of the Army Contracting Command, my overarching goal is to implement the technology solutions needed to improve contracting processes across the Army, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. A key part of our effort involves modernizing the technology infrastructure for an organization that had been relying on antiquated, labor-intensive and paper based processes.

The mission of the ACC, which was established in 2008 as a major subordinate organization within the Army Materiel Command, is to provide global contracting support to warfighters through the full spectrum of military operations, including humanitarian relief operations such as those recently undertaken in Haiti. In these situations lives are often on the line and contracting plays a vital role in acquiring the goods and services needed for mission success.

The CIO organization provides command, control, communications, computers and information management operational capabilities in support of ACC. To accomplish our mission, we use a holistic, creative and focused approach to problem solving. Our key Gino Magnifico values—integrity, responsiveness and determination—are not merely statements recorded in a document, but qualities we work to reinforce every day throughout our organization in pursuit of four strategic goals:

- Establish and execute an information technology governance process
- Facilitate knowledge sharing across the ACC enterprise
- Establish program execution
- Establish and support a deployable IT infrastructure.

Our IT organization has grown from a staff of three to about 25 in less than two years, and we support 5,500 people at approximately 115 locations worldwide. To most effectively meet the needs of ACC, we established a schedule-centric, program management culture that meticulously ties people's job goals and performance evaluations to objectives developed and published in a CIO Strategic Plan.

Our people are continually mentored and reminded about how their daily job responsibilities tie into meeting one or more of four strategic objectives, which are carefully aligned with the goals of the ACC's executive director and the goals of AMC. In turn, each ACC strategic goal

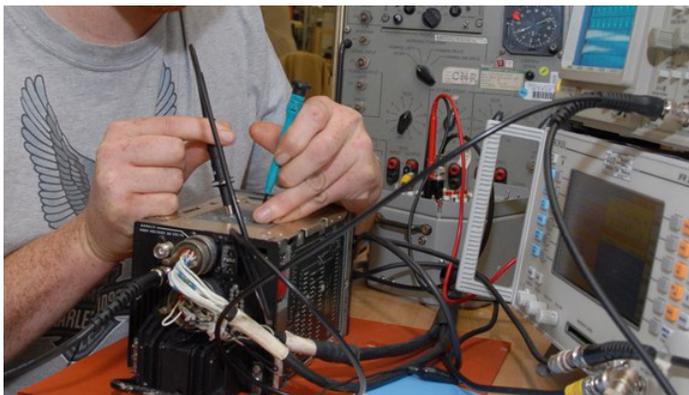


Gino Magnifico currently serves as the Chief Information Officer for the Army Contracting Command. (U.S. Army Photo.)

has subordinate objectives, and each of those objectives has subordinate tasks. The power of this alignment is that every person in the organization knows exactly how her or his work ties into meeting key strategic goals. The goals, objectives and strategies included in the CIO Strategic Plan are designed to support the continuing maturity and growth of ACC over the coming years, but we plan to revisit the plan periodically. To establish program execution for the newly formed ACC organization, we implemented three key projects that directly impacted ACC's ability to control and present contract data across the globe: Enterprise Lifecycle Management, Server Consolidation and Web Presence.

ENSURING IT INVESTMENTS IMPROVE MISSION PERFORMANCE

One of our top strategic goals involved putting in place the organization and processes needed to ensure that IT investments provide measurable improvements in mission performance. This also included establishing a comprehensive approach to managing how IT assets are acquired, developed, used and disposed. To help achieve these goals we implemented an Enterprise Lifecycle



IMPLEMENTING FOUR DISTINCT WEB ENVIRONMENTS FOR TARGETED OBJECTIVES

From an information-dissemination perspective, our Web Presence project used four distinct environments (SharePoint, Army Knowledge Online, acc.army.mil and army-hire.com) to accomplish four distinct objectives. The Web Presence project provides portals for specific user communities and/or specific functions such as performing contracting functions, recruiting new employees, sharing knowledge and carrying out administrative activities:

- SharePoint is used internally for collaboration within specific teams or across the command. It is a content management platform that facilitates information sharing and workflows, and it increases productivity by providing users with a central place to exchange information and perform key business processes.
- Army Knowledge Online (AKO) is the U.S. Army's primary intranet site and includes restricted areas for carrying out classified work. It is the main portal used by the Expeditionary Contracting Command (ECC), which provides contracting support to the Army and other federal organizations at installations outside the Continental United States, including during military operations.
- acc.army.mil is the platform used by the general public and is the Website used to communicate news and information about the command, its staff and its contracting centers. It includes a section dedicated to the ACC Small Business Program as well as sections for the ACC's two subordinate commands, the ECC and the Mission and Installation Contracting Command, which provides contracting within the Continental United States.
- www.armyhire.com is used by job seekers who are in search of information about civilian job openings in ACC. The positions are for contracting and procurement personnel, and are open to people currently employed in industry or in government. The Website is supported by extensive social media marketing activities and contains information about ACC, available job openings, geographic locations and job benefits. Monthly Web statistics reveal significant ongoing growth in the number of visitors as well as job applications.

DEFINING OPERATIONAL PHILOSOPHY BY FOUR PILLARS OF SERVICE

The Clinger-Cohen Act, which establishes guidance for the acquisition, use and disposal of IT assets, provides the foundation upon which we deliver services. A key part of our Strategic Plan involves defining the overall CIO Philosophy in terms of four pillars of service that rest upon the foundation of Clinger-Cohen:

- Governance Practices
 - Knowledge Sharing
 - Program Execution
 - Deployable IT Infrastructure and Personnel
- Governance practices consist of establishing business policy

Management program. By consolidating asset management under the ELM program, we were able to take advantage of economies of scale with respect to ordering IT equipment for the entire enterprise. This centralized approach to IT funding and management replaced a localized approach that lacked any of the standardization required to drive efficiency and effectiveness throughout the field offices and user community.

With ELM, we implemented a strategic sourcing approach to acquiring hardware and software. The approach significantly reduced costs while delivering much-improved IT capabilities to many areas of the organization that greatly needed it. Some of these areas, which previously could barely get funds for upgrades, were prioritized to quickly receive critical IT improvements.

The ELM initiative established an important level of control over processes such as software licensing, and it streamlined processes for acquiring and managing IT assets. All of these efforts contributed to minimizing unplanned disruptions, enabling a more secure IT infrastructure and increasing standardization. ELM has also reduced total cost of ownership while ensuring life cycle replacement of IT assets at specific intervals. Most importantly, ELM is ensuring that all offices and employees have the technology they need for mission accomplishment.

Additionally, we implemented a server consolidation project that is solving one of the most vexing problems for the command—how to get important data out of the system quickly and from anywhere in the world. Previously, up to 100 people at locations worldwide may have been involved in performing operations such as running data scripts to gather needed data across disconnected, non-integrated servers and applications. Now, server consolidation is enabling a one-touch-point solution that radically simplifies data access and transfer.

and business rules, creating structure by clarifying roles and responsibilities and developing business processes.

Three key areas for IT governance are:

- Requirements management that gives a true voice to clients' requirements;
- Portfolio management that provides a comprehensive approach to managing the acquisition, use and disposal of IT assets;
- Information Assurance (IA) as a mechanism to enforce and implement the Army's IA policy.

Knowledge sharing encompasses both external collaboration and internal communication. Tools enable our communities to develop more rapidly and become more efficient and effective. We deliver the necessary technologies and processes that enhance the ability to share relevant knowledge sooner, more accurately and with better results—and we do this by actively seeking relevant information and quickly sharing it using the most efficient tools available. Internally, our staff focuses on understanding customer requirements, managing our relationships with customers and other key stakeholders, and developing our professional competence. Program Execution promulgates a culture of program management that focuses on cost, schedule and performance for all IT projects across the enterprise. Execution begins with a robust requirements management process that is followed by a comprehensive approach to establishing a business case, evaluating risks, providing metrics and conducting ongoing program management reviews. Programs are managed through detailed task plans, weekly status reports based on task plans and monthly program management reviews. Our organization is committed to using proven, practical best practices to ensure that all IT investments provide measurable improvements in mission performance.

Deployable IT infrastructure and personnel provide C4IM capabilities for the ECC commander during contingency operations. The team also ensures communications capabilities are maintained in a ready state for all ECC subordinate units and Contingency Contracting Office teams.

In a recent example of this team's work, within hours after the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti in January, the ECC 410th Contracting Support Brigade was engaged, and in less than 72 hours ECC personnel were on the ground beginning operations. Contracting officers were required to work within an almost nonexistent IT infrastructure; yet with technology improvements and satellite communications support coordinated by ACC IT staff, deployed personnel were able to rapidly syn-

chronize efforts with other governmental and nongovernmental organizations and successfully establish two regional contracting centers.

During combat operations, this deployable IT infrastructure provides a significant force multiplier for the warfighter. Soldiers in the field depend on contracting support for critical supplies that are key to mission success. The deployable IT team develops, installs and operates the communications and computer networks, systems and applications needed to support the full spectrum of operations. The personnel who deploy are highly professional, trained specialists who truly understand the importance of how timely contracting operations provide vital support to warfighters in combat zones.

USING AN ENTERPRISE APPROACH TO ESTABLISH AN INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH IT INFRASTRUCTURE

All of these efforts and philosophies are focused on providing an efficient yet "industrial strength" IT infrastructure—one that cost-effectively provides needed services and access to information in a reliable, secure manner. By providing utility-like services from a common enterprise infrastructure, we have freed-up resources across ACC and the Army. Personnel now have more time to build applications and develop services that take advantage of their core competencies while continuing to meet client demands.

Adopting an enterprise approach to IT has proved to be an effective route for helping to transform myriad local ACC organizations into a much more cohesive unit. Our IT users and industry partners need to view ACC as a single organization, not as a broad collection of separate entities, and the enterprise approach is helping make this a reality.

Developing and implementing a disciplined IT strategy makes a critical difference in the success of any organization. And once the strategy is in place, it is important to measure everyone's performance according to how well their daily job responsibilities contribute to meeting higher-level objectives. It is a proven formula that can be applied anywhere. ♦

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