

Improving the performance of the United States Department of Defense Workforce by Defining and Solving Organizational Problems

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Abstract

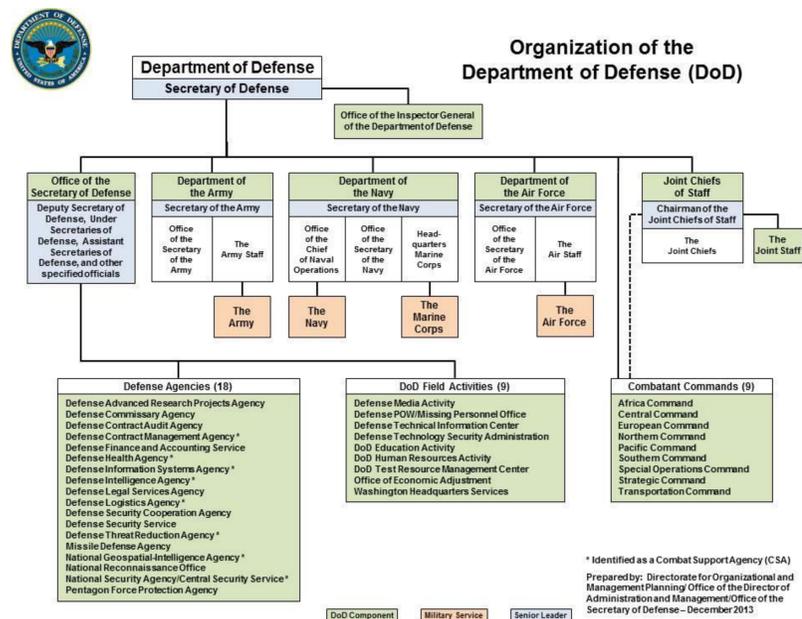
This study uses structural problem solving as a methodology to define and solve organizational performance within the United States Department of Defense (DoD). First, the article presents the organizational challenges within the DoD and its impact on workforce performance. Afterwards, it discusses its causes and the possible actions needed to solve it. Then, it selects one main problem as the focus for the study, providing actions and arguments for its selection as the proposed solution to solve DoD's organizational challenges.

Introduction

The United States Department of Defense (DoD) provides the military forces needed to deter war and ensure the security of the United States of America (U.S.) [1]. Wherein, it coordinates and supervises all government agencies directly related to National Security and U.S. Armed Forces. At a glance, the DoD counts with a \$716 billion of the National Defense Budget and 2.87 million employees in more than 160 countries [1]. The amount of DoD employees makes it the largest global employer in the world [2].

Problem Statement

Being the largest employer globally comes with many challenges, especially when there are different organizations interacting together in the different DoD agencies. Some of the cross-organizational challenges include the use of different strategies, vision, and priorities between critical entities. These challenges discourage collaboration, since most of the time the processes employed do not provide continuous collaboration and interaction to encourage productivity and innovation.



Objectives

- Provide a deeper understanding of the organizational challenges within the DoD and its impact on innovation and productivity within the workforce
- Provide research data that demonstrates the possible actions needed to improve innovation and productivity within the DoD

Analysis Method

"A structural problem solving approach is used as a process that identifies, analyzes and eliminates the discrepancy between the current situation and an existing standard or expectation, and to prevent recurrence of the root cause" [3]. Wherein, the structured problem solving approach is employed in the form of the Deming Cycle which has been customized toward the objectives and time constraints of this article.

The Deming Cycle is initially employed using the Annual Report from the Inspector General as the main source to identify the most serious management and performance challenges. Wherein, "these challenges are identified based on a variety of factors, including DoD Office of Inspector General (OIG) oversight work, research, and judgement; oversight work done by other DoD Components; oversight work conducted by the Government Accountability Office; and input from DoD officials" [4]. In addition, the National Defense Strategy (NDS) is also used since it provides the future objectives for the overall DoD military posture.

Deming Cycle

1 Identification of Organizational Problems that affect the Workforce Performance

- Bureaucratic approach centered on exacting thoroughness and minimizing risk above anything else
- Failure to deliver performance at the speed of relevance
- Lack of organizational structure to support innovation
- Financial Management: Ineffective actions
- Acquisition and Contract Management: Ensuring that the DoD gets what it pays for (on time, at a fair price, and with the right capabilities)
- Implementation of DoD Reform Activities

2 Selection of Organizational Problem of Focus

- Acquisition and Contract Management: Ensuring that the DoD gets what it pays for (on time, at a fair price, and with the right capabilities)

3 Analysis of Problem Causes

- Current disconnect between the warfighter/demand tempo and the Acquisition/Contracting tempo
- Old Acquisition and Contracting Management regulations, rules and practices

4 Generation of Potential Solutions

- Changes in organizational practices
- Improvement of Acquisition and Contract Management policies and practices to respond to the challenges faced today
- Adoption of Agile mindset across all organizations

5 Selection and Planning of the best solution

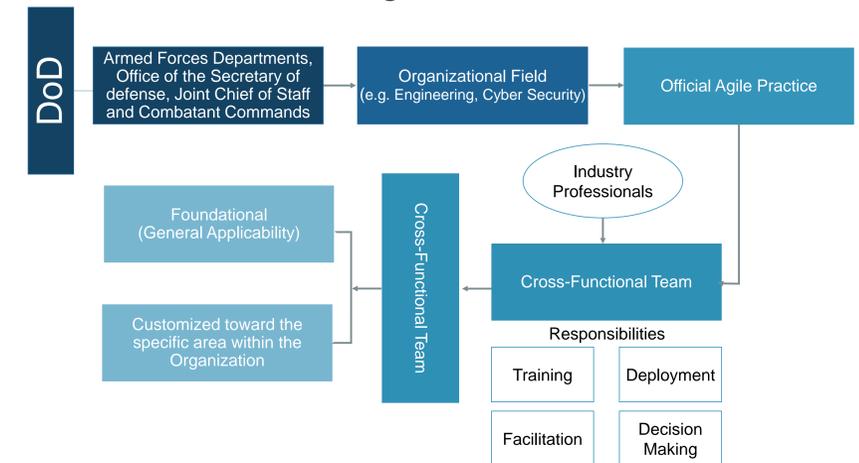
- Adoption of an Agile mindset across all organizations to evaluate failures/setbacks as opportunities to learn, encourage collaboration between peers/teams, distribute the idea that change is a good thing, continuously go over different solutions and concentrate on the delivery of quick results to ultimately achieve significant value for the organization [4]

Results and Discussion

After analyzing the different potential solutions, the adoption of an Agile mindset across all organizations in the field was selected as the potential solution for this study. As it would allow attention to all of the problem causes previously mentioned. The Agile methods are a set of practices and methods that compensate for each other by creating a system that can continue to change/adapt over time [5].

- Scaling and spreading the Agile mindset in the field of Acquisition and Contract Management would need Cross-Functional Teams through all organizations within the DoD.

Scaling and Spreading the Agile Mindset through all DoD Organizations



At first, a use-case based approach would be implemented by selecting three different DoD organizations across multiple agencies. These organizations would then obtain the committee services with the purpose of measuring success and performing iterations over multiple workshops until effective ones for Acquisition and Contract Management are found. These initial organizations would put in practice the objectives and goals of the cross-functional team. The promotional and implementation phase would allow for organizations to obtain proper guidance on Agile with verified results. This would be the initial strategy to change the culture and mindset of the organization. However, it is important to empathize that the Agile process is not about processes, but rather about the people, experiences, continuous collaboration and results. Therefore, the organization would need to learn from new experiences including failures, instead of static approaches with little to no changes over time (e.g. outdated policies and practices). As changes in organizational practices, policy, and, workforce roles and responsibilities would take place.

Conclusion

Finally, a deeper understanding of the organizational challenges within the DoD and its impact on innovation and productivity within the workforce was achieved. Wherein, the structured problem solving approach found that the adoption of an Agile mindset across all organizations would develop faster and more innovative solutions for most of the Acquisition and Contracting Management problems that the DoD is facing nowadays. The findings in this study established that the adoption of an Agile mindset would involve changes in organizational practices, policy, and, workforce roles and responsibilities.

And, by leveraging the Agile mindset, a system that can continue to change/adapt over time can be achieved. As continuous collaboration, interaction and change are the foundational concepts needed to improve workforce performance.

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