

Case Study for DLIS (merger of 5 organizations and cultures into one)

DLIS Profile

The Department of Defense Logistics Information Service (<http://www.dlis.dla.mil/what.asp>) is the cataloging activity for all of items in the Federal Supply Catalogue and Federal Supply System.

Business situation

Prior to 1999 each branch of service (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Defense Logistics Agency) had responsibility for cataloging their own items of supply, based on cataloging guidance provided in Department of Defense (DoD) regulations. The DoD decided to consolidate all cataloging activity in one location (Battle Creek, MI) where the Defense Logistics Information Service and the Air Force had their activities. The other services relocated as their activities and many of their individuals to Battle Creek Michigan. It was determined that this consolidation would save the Department of Defense considerable money and provide more consistency in the way items of supply were catalogued.

Organizational situation

The organizational effect of this consolidation resulted in the merger of five different organizational cultures. The top level leader of the organization (Marine Corps Colonel Robert Songer) realized both the difficulty and the opportunity to this organizational merger.

Solution

Immediately following the physical relocation of all personnel to Battle Creek. He hosted a strategic visioning and planning session. This session was conducted with 85 people participating in two full day sessions. This was the first opportunity that the entire leadership of the organization, from first-line supervisor through the commander, had all been in one room at the same time. The Advanced Management Catalyst (AMCat) visioning process was utilized to create a compelling vision of what the merged organization would be. Within six hours, the group had collectively describe in detail, what they all want to for the new organization. This included perspectives from their customers, themselves, their suppliers, and there in internal processes. The resulting vision guided the organization through two successive changes of command without any change in the overall organizational vision. The following day, the group detailed the short-term action plans that were needed to begin to move them toward their long-range vision.

Benefits

The benefits to the organization were numerous, and for the most part, cannot be reduced to financial statistics. The overall organizational benefit was a smooth transition to consolidated cataloging for the Department of Defense. The new organization was able to refer to and reflect on their jointly created vision to guide their process consolidation and streamlining discussions and actions. (Note: The organization vision statement on the DLIS web site referenced above has evolved over the years, but the essential elements and tone of the vision were first established in the initial planning session.)