

PROCUREMENT LEADERSHIP: FROM MEANS TO ENDS

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ABSTRACT. Procurement is often perceived as a tactical rather than a strategic function. Such perceptions result from the way procurement is usually defined as beginning after a need has been identified. Procurement thus focuses on tactical decisions involving means rather than on strategic decisions involving ends. For procurement to become strategic, procurement professionals must be recognized as having legitimate leadership roles in determining organizational ends. The paper presents two conceptual frameworks to move procurement in this direction. The first—pragmatism—resolves the dichotomy between ends and means. The second—a conservator model of agency leadership—highlights the importance of promoting and maintaining public procurement's institutional integrity. Together, these may equip procurement professionals to adopt leadership roles in strategic organizational decision making.

INTRODUCTION

At a recent symposium on defense acquisition¹, several speakers' remarks expressed a common theme: that the requirements identification process for defense procurement was dysfunctional, and that this was the most important problem currently facing the defense acquisition community. Yet none of these speakers, many of whom were senior procurement officials, proposed a remedy. Upon reflection, the reason for their silence on how to fix the requirements process is obvious: none of these speakers were participants in that process. As procurement professionals, they were not responsible for

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requirements; rather, they were responsible mainly for executing procurement actions in response to requirements. One would expect that these expert and capable officials should have had much to contribute to improving the requirements process. Why were they not actively involved in doing so?

This question is related to the major questions addressed in this paper: why does procurement continue to be perceived as a tactical and routine function rather than a strategic one, and what can be done about such perceptions? Most see procurement as dealing mainly with questions of means (how to do something) rather than with questions of ends (what to do). The paper discusses the reasons for this circumstance and the difficulties in moving away from it. It argues that, in order for procurement to be recognized as a strategic function, its professionals must be recognized as leaders in terms of their participation in strategic decisions involving ends. They must embrace ends through involvement in organizational needs determination activities, while at the same time continue to carry out the means of procurement.

To accomplish a break from this means-centric mode, procurement professionals will need an understanding of how to resolve the separation between ends and means. Further, they will need a model for strategic action or leadership that is appropriate for their situation. The paper presents two frameworks that address these needs: philosophical pragmatism to bridge the ends-means dichotomy, and the “conservator” model of public agency leadership.

The method of this paper is exploratory (pre-empirical) conceptual analysis, and it is generally critical in nature. It attempts to illuminate and call into question certain assumptions and tacit beliefs about procurement’s proper orientation as a field of study and practice. Its intent is to contribute to the conception of new or revised boundaries for the field of procurement and for its ideas on leadership.

BACKGROUND OF THE LITERATURE

A significant amount of procurement literature reflects concern over perceptions of the field as a merely clerical or tactical function. This literature is generally introspective in that it is produced by members of the procurement community in procurement-related publications, the principal audience of which are members of that

same community. The thrust of this literature is that such perceptions are either incorrect or detrimental to the field, or both. Its prescriptions are usually that procurement needs to be redefined or recognized as a strategic activity, thereby elevating its members in prestige and importance. One group of authors captured this concern over the field's identity in describing public procurement as the "Rodney Dangerfield" of governmental activities; that is, it gets no respect due to its routine and mundane features (Gordon, Zemansky & Sekwat, 2000). Other authors (Leenders & Fearon, 1997; McCue & Gianakis, 2001; Matthews, 2005) argue that, to the contrary, procurement is becoming more strategic through developments such as supply chain management and increases in outsourcing. Cases such as IBM's "supply transformation" (Eck & Mitchell, 2003; Schildhouse, 2005) and the U.S. Air Force's implementation of strategic sourcing through Commodity Councils (Rendon, 2005; Gillen, 2006) are cited to support this position.

Procurement and Leadership

This issue of procurement's strategic character may also be viewed from the perspective of leadership. Leadership of an organization involves, among other activities, promoting vision, setting strategies, defining goals, and providing direction. To the extent that procurement professionals exercise such acts of leadership in large complex organizations such as firms and public agencies, the procurement function may be considered strategic rather than clerical or routine.

A review of this literature on procurement and leadership indicates that, for the most part, the two are not closely linked. Over thirty years ago, Ammer (1974) surveyed industry executives to investigate, among other questions, their perceptions of the purchasing function. He found that general managers saw (1) leadership as an unimportant characteristic for purchasing managers; (2) purchasing as having little interaction with the mainstream of management; and (3) little involvement by purchasing in strategic decisions.

To judge from more recent research, little has changed. In a study of the functional backgrounds of CEOs in large U.S. manufacturing firms, neither purchasing nor procurement was listed as a potential functional background, which indicates that very few if

any CEOs had experience in either (Ocasio & Kim, 1999). Another study of purchasing initiatives in twenty-eight large firms found that many of the firms' chief purchasing officers (CPOs) had been appointed from outside the procurement function. Only three of the CPOs had purchasing experience, and in each instance, that experience was less than two years (Smeltzer, 1998). The clear implication is that procurement professionals in these firms were judged to be less qualified than non-procurement professionals to lead change, even change involving procurement. McCue and Gianakis (2001), while asserting that procurement is now playing a more strategic role in organizations, concluded from a survey of procurement professionals that these professionals did not consider planning—an activity aligned with strategy and leadership—a major component of their duties. The respondents also found planning to be insignificant compared to other steps in the procurement process. A later study (Johnson, Leenders & McCue, 2003) developed similar conclusions, finding that procurement managers and offices have relatively little to do with major organizational activities.

Taken together, this body of research indicates that procurement is still considered by many both within and outside the field to be a routine function with little relation with organizational strategy and leadership. Claims that procurement is now strategic are thus either premature or perhaps should be limited to some segment of the field.

Public vs. Private Sector Procurement

The reasons for these mixed assessments of whether procurement is becoming strategic or remaining tactical may be attributable in part to differences between public and private sector procurement. Purchasing and procurement may have more of a strategic character in the private sector than in the public sector. One study concluded that procurement professionals in private firms were more involved in major organizational activities (e.g., marketing, financial planning) than were public procurement managers (Johnson, Leenders & McCue, 2003, pp. 69-71). If indeed there is a difference between private sector and public procurement in the extent to which either is strategic, this difference is most likely due to (1) the comparative ease with which major organizational decisions involving procurement may be made in the private sector on a financial basis alone (Smeltzer, 1998; Lester 2000); and (2) considerations other than financial (e.g., equity, competition,

transparency (Schiavo-Campo & Sundaram, 2000; World Bank, 2004) which distinguish public procurement and may limit the innovation, creativity, and discretion of public procurement officials, thus inhibiting their abilities to operate at strategic levels (Matthews, 2005; McCue & Gianakis, 2001). Accepting the potential for such a difference, the remainder of this paper will focus mainly on public procurement.

The literature reviewed thus far indicates that the procurement function lacks an aspect of organizational leadership. This of course does not mean that procurement managers may not be effective leaders of procurement organizations or offices. Rather, the procurement function, represented by procurement professionals, does not take a leading role in larger organizations such as government agencies. This is evident from the absence of procurement considerations in major organizational activities, particularly organizational planning and the setting of organizational strategy. Organizational leadership necessarily involves activities such as casting vision, providing purpose, and setting goals (Barnard, 1968; Bennis, 1989; Burns, 1978; Follett, 1949; Zaleznik, 1977). To the extent that procurement professionals are absent from these types of activities, procurement is viewed as a function of "followership" rather than as one associated with leadership, and by implication, more clerical and tactical than strategic.

The absence of procurement professionals from organizational leadership may be either voluntary (they wish to be so absent) or involuntary (they wish to participate as leaders but are excluded from doing so). The findings above (e.g., McCue & Gianakis, 2001) indicate the former. Procurement professionals apparently believe that they do not have a proper or legitimate place in organizational leadership.

Procurement Theory and Practice

The origins and reasons for such beliefs may be explained by examining the content of basic procurement training and educational literature; specifically, the textbooks by which procurement professionals are taught the essentials of the field, its characteristics, its functions, and its boundaries. These texts typically present procurement as a process or series of activities. Most emphasize procurement as beginning once a need has been identified. For

example, Sherman (1985) separates needs definition and analysis from procurement and contract management functions. Garrett (1997), while acknowledging a procurement planning step, emphasizes the “how to” of contracting once a decision to buy has been reached. Leenders and Fearon (1997) also present the purchasing process as beginning with a need being brought to the purchasing department, though they recognize the benefits of that department’s involvement in the need recognition stage. Similarly, both Raedels (2000) and Engelbeck (2002) describe the procurement process as beginning once agency or user needs have been established.

This brief survey of basic procurement texts indicates that the field essentially defines itself in a way that excludes it from participation in a major activity of any organization: determination of needs that may result in a procurement action. Through such texts, procurement professionals learn to think of their field in a way that discourages them from participating in strategic decisions and thus from acting as organizational and institutional leaders.

This perspective of procurement’s proper role is not simply limited to the basic texts. For example, the District of Columbia’s Office of Contracting & Procurement (OCP) process manual states that individual District agencies determine their procurement requirements and budgets to satisfy those requirements, while OCP makes purchases to meet agency requirements (District of Columbia, 2006). Another example is found in the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) procurement regulations:

Procurement action to effect the purchase of materiel and/or services shall be commenced by the Contracting Officer/buyer only after receipt of a PR [Purchase Requisition] for materiel and/or services from an activity authorized to issue such a PR. (NAMSA, 2005, p. 8/47)

These two examples are evidence that agency procurement practices reflect the basic texts’ concept of procurement as a function that is constrained from strategic organizational and institutional decisions.

PROCUREMENT’S ENDS-MEANS DISTINCTION

The discussion to this point leads to the conclusion that procurement is defined mainly as a field of study and practice which

is focused significantly more on means rather than on ends. That is, procurement is little concerned with questions of whether to buy and what to buy, while much concerned with questions of how to buy something that someone outside procurement has decided to buy. This conclusion should of course be taken as disparaging to procurement professionals. It should not be taken as neglecting or minimizing the potential importance of the more strategically oriented procurement trends mentioned earlier, which may indeed signal some major shift in the field. The point to be emphasized is that, currently, procurement is means-focused rather than ends-focused. If one accepts this conclusion, then what does this mean for the future of the field, and what if anything should be done?

As long as procurement remains focused mainly on means rather than ends, it will always be reactive in nature. That is, procurement's activities will follow from decisions made by non-procurement organizational leaders, rather than influencing those decisions in a proactive way. In order to become truly strategic, procurement must align itself with the kinds of leadership activities associated with decisions about and determinations of organizational and institutional needs. Procurement must somehow bridge the gap between ends and means.

The question of why the field of procurement has coalesced around means rather than also embracing ends is a separate question that cannot be adequately addressed in this paper. No doubt some portion of the explanation concerns the specialized knowledge and skills developed by the field in order to carry out effective and efficient procurement; that is, the specialized knowledge and skills that serve as the means of procurement. Some may argue that procurement by definition involves only means, that the activity of procurement necessarily involves an object—the “thing” to be procured—the item required. For others, determining the best and proper means to realize that end, along with efficiently implementing those means, is a sufficiently complex and technical activity that encompasses the full and proper measure of “procurement.” Proponents of strategic procurement, on the other hand, would respond that times have changed (see for example Callender & Matthews, 2002) and that this means-centric definition of procurement is inadequate for contemporary circumstances. Thus, the field of procurement must evolve in such a way that it begins to embrace ends, or else it risks becoming irrelevant.

Recognition that procurement needs to evolve to encompass ends may be evident in the basic texts reviewed earlier. As noted, several of these (e.g., Garrett, 1997; Leenders & Fearon, 1997) include brief mention of the importance of needs determination but with little or no explanation or discussion of that as an activity central to the procurement process. These authors apparently acknowledge the importance of ends to the function of procurement, but they have not yet taken the next step of incorporating ends as an essential part of the function.

Difficulties in Adopting Ends

This step may be a very difficult one for the field to take for several reasons. One reason is professional inertia. The procurement community's ideas of what constitutes the field, its body of knowledge, and its proper boundaries have developed over many years. They are now reflected in a variety of artifacts such as textbooks, training manuals, regulations, standard operating procedures, and the codes of procurement-related professional associations such as the National Institute of Government Purchasing. If it occurs, embracing ends as an essential feature of the field will likely take many years as its members develop and refine new knowledge and practices and then incorporate those into new procurement artifacts.

It is of course possible that those in procurement will reject a reorientation toward ends. One explanation of such an outcome may be found in the literature on the sociology of the professions (Jackson, 1970; Liberman, 1970; Friedson, 1986; Pavalko, 1988). Among other points, this literature describes how, in the process of becoming "professionalized," professions tend to become inwardly focused on maintaining and sustaining their unique claims to specialized skills and knowledge. In so doing, they become less able to incorporate change and adapt to new circumstances (Snider, 1996; Gordon, Zemansky & Sekwat, 2000). This perspective would predict that, rather than changing to embrace ends, the procurement profession will tend toward insularity, and thus remaining focused on means.

A less critical explanation for why procurement may reject ends comes from the public administration literature on the "politics-administration dichotomy" (Goodnow, 1902; Wilson, 1887). The

reform-minded founders of the field of American public administration at the turn of the twentieth century were concerned to remove bureaucrats from the “messy” realm of politics. Politics, as political scientist David Easton put it, is “the authoritative allocation of value” (1965, p. 96) and so is inextricably enmeshed with ends. Administrators, as the argument went, needed to be freed from politics so that they could employ their professional knowledge and technical expertise to increase the efficiency of government operations. Thus, politicians were rightfully concerned with ends, and bureaucrats with means. In the same vein, procurement professionals may argue that the key central task of the field is to promote efficiency, and that efficiency would be jeopardized if they ventured into the realm of value-laden politics. (It is appropriate here to note that, because of its distance from what some felt was the truly important and interesting realm of politics, early American public administration was sometimes characterized as a drab profession associated with “counting manhole covers” and other mundane tasks (Waldo, 1984). It seems a similar fate has befallen procurement.)

Some may argue that having significant procurement involvement in needs determination would compromise internal control principles. Internal control systems in organizations encompass several structural components designed to minimize mistakes, instances of poor judgment, and wrong-doing. Segregation of duties is a common internal control mechanism, similar to institutional checks and balances in a nation’s governmental system. The response to such a criticism is that procurement need not “own” needs determination activities, but rather it should participate substantially in those activities. As long as other agencies and functions also participate, internal control principles can be maintained.

What will happen if procurement fails to embrace ends? One may speculate that one of two developments may occur. First, it is possible that the field may split along the lines of strategic procurement and traditional procurement. An example of this type of split is that between mainstream public administration and the emerging field of public management. Public management proponents believe that mainstream public administration’s traditional theories of bureaucratic governance are out of step with the times and ill-equipped for the exigencies of contemporary government. Public management emphasizes managerial concerns such as efficiency, accountability, and performance measurement,

and it is often linked to a preference for market-based approaches in government (Graham & Hays, 1993).

A second possibility is that a completely new field may arise to bridge the gap between ends and means. Project management arose as just such a “bridge” field. That is, prior to the advent of highly technical modern systems, those who developed needs could simply describe those needs to procurement professionals for purchase or contract. As needs became more complex, however, so also did the means for satisfying them. Most describe project management as arising during the mid-twentieth century as a way to manage the development and acquisition of new, one-of-a-kind, highly advanced systems such as atomic weapons and space and missile systems (see for example Cleland, 1999). Project management thus provided a necessary bridge of managerial techniques between a statement of need for a complex and unique system and the provision of that system.

FROM MEANS TO ENDS: PRAGMATISM

The project of moving procurement from a means-centric orientation to one that also embraces ends will entail, as the previous discussion suggests, addressing several significant structural issues, including organizational, procedural, and professional issues. All of these require more careful treatment than can be provided in this paper. Of course, all of these issues are based on a concept of procurement that separates ends and means. A way of thinking about ends and means as inseparable and integrated would provide an alternative foundation for re-thinking the nature and boundaries of procurement in a way that would encompass needs determination activities.

Such a resolution of ends-means dichotomies was provided by late nineteenth and early twentieth century pragmatist philosophers such as Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. These men rejected the traditional philosophical dualisms of facts vs. values, ends vs. means, and thought vs. action. Such dualisms were exacerbated by the widening nineteenth century rift between those who were romantics and idealists and those who were empiricists and Darwinists. The pragmatists attempted to heal these splits by grounding the meaning of ideas in practical experience. As Peirce (1997, p. 36) put it in his original formulation of pragmatism,

“consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.”

While pragmatism in contemporary common usage refers simply to an attitude of practicality (“doing whatever works”), its early philosopher proponents intended it as a much more rigorous and communitarian system of thought. They argued that, if the meanings of ideas were based on observable and verifiable sensory experiences of their consequences, then beliefs could be fixed in a public sense to the extent that a community of inquirers could agree on the meaning of those consequences.

With regard to the point of this paper, pragmatism provided a resolution to the ends-means dichotomy in the following way. As mentioned above, pragmatism grounds ideas, including those associated with values and ends, in human experience. The value of any idea is a matter of the extent to which any particular arrangement of facts serves to “carry us prosperously from one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily” (James, 1907, p. 58). Dewey said, “It is therefore not the origin of a concept, it is its application which becomes the criterion of its value” (1998, p. 10). Because actions have value in their ability to resolve some problematic situation, value is inherent in action. The act that will resolve the situation most successfully is therefore the most valuable act. Thus, ends (values) cannot be separated from means (action). Flowers and Murphey (1977, pp. 846-847) explain this blurring of distinctions:

[E]nds and means are relative to the perspective from which a course of action is surveyed; thus an end is a series of acts viewed from a remote stage and a means the view of the series from an earlier one...[E]nds are not separable from means at all, since choice is directed to a total configuration of action...[T]his implies that in actual planning the ends are so pervasively penetrated with means that different means in effect make different ends while different ends make different means.

Stumpf (1966, p. 418) uses an example of a leaking roof to illustrate Dewey’s pragmatism:

[T]he problem of the leaking roof raises *all at once* the questions of both *ends* and *means*. A person quickly realizes that a leaky roof calls for action. Before action is begun, intelligence is used to sort out the various possibilities for stopping the leak. The function of intelligence is to appraise the consequences of various alternatives, using knowledge based on past experience or experiment. The human intelligence did not have to be endowed or supplied with either a theory of 'ultimate ends' or an elaborate 'hierarchy of values' in order to deal effectively with the problem. All that was needed to solve this problem could be discovered by the functioning of intelligence. (emphasis in original)

Value (or an end) is therefore "not simply satisfaction of desire, but rather the satisfactory solution of the problem reflected by desire" (p. 420).

Philosophical pragmatism is certainly not without its critics and problems (e.g., its failure to consider ultimate goods or final ends; its optimistic faith in human intelligence). But one does not have to embrace the fullness of pragmatic philosophy in order to grasp the appeal of pragmatism applied to procurement. It is clear, upon reflection, that the end of any procurement (i.e., the need or requirement that procurement satisfies) is itself simply a means to some previously defined end. To use an example from defense acquisition, a new aircraft may be identified as a need to a contracting officer. But the aircraft itself is simply a means to achieve some other end, possibly air superiority, which may also be a means for another end, possibly long-range force projection, and so on. If the proposed aircraft is not effective, or if the procurement is not carried out effectively, none of the ends (which are also means) may be met. Thus, the effective procurement of the aircraft is in fact an end as well as a means.

Pragmatism helps answer what may be the most significant objection to procurement professionals' involvement in needs determination – that they are not qualified to do so. As mentioned earlier, needs are usually developed by user or line personnel or their representatives. The widely-accepted rationale is that users are best qualified to determine requirements for what other users need, and it is left to procurement professionals to determine how to obtain that which satisfies the requirements. According to the pragmatic

perspective, the “how” of procurement is inextricably connected to the “what.” For example, if the procurement means for one particular given item is judged to be time-consuming, costly, or fraught with political risk, the end may be jeopardized. If the means for a different item will be quick, easy, and inexpensive, the end is more assured. By participating in needs determination, procurement professionals can contribute to a better understanding by all concerned of the advantages and disadvantages of each potential course of action.

From this perspective, the heavy involvement of procurement professionals in the definition of the requirement that they will have to fulfill seems eminently sensible. That procurement professionals would not participate in requirements development would mean that much of an organization’s available intelligence, in the forms both of past experience as to what has and has not worked and of insights into what might work best in the future, is not employed to solve whatever problem it faces.

LEADERSHIP FOR ENDS: THE CONSERVATOR

While pragmatism may help procurement professionals to embrace ends, they will also need a conceptual foundation for understanding how to embrace ends while also maintaining the field’s past emphasis on efficient means. This foundation must consist of a suitable theory of leadership. Traditional managerial theories generally focus on leadership of organizations. In this case, however, the concern is not with how procurement professionals can lead their own procurement offices. It is rather with how they can exercise leadership in needs determination activities that lie outside both their organizational boundaries and their realms of functional expertise and legitimate involvement.

Some may propose entrepreneurial leadership models based on, variously, Osborne and Gaebler’s “reinventing government” (1992), the New Public Management (Kettl, 1997; Kickert, 1997), or Gingrich’s (2005) “entrepreneurial public management.” While perhaps adequate for emphasizing the outward-looking change aspects of gaining participation in needs determination activities, such perspectives have little to say about maintaining and nurturing aspects of procurement that do not lend themselves to entrepreneurship. For example, procurement professionals are not allowed to be entrepreneurial with respect to certain structural (e.g.,

Constitutional, regulatory, professional) features of the field. Robert Behn's (2001) analysis of the difficult issue of accountability under New Public Management is applicable to this point.

Larry Terry's (2002) model of the public administrator as "conservator" provides a more complete and nuanced view of the kind of leadership needed for procurement's move toward ends. Terry describes three areas—managerial, legal, and institutional—in which leaders must operate effectively. The managerial area entails the traditionally recognized skills, knowledge, and abilities associated with leadership in organizations. The legal area encompasses structurally prescribed roles and duties of leaders. The institutional area emphasizes an agency's mission, roles, and boundaries that are socially constructed and negotiated through dealings and relationships with other agencies (Thai, 2001). As Morgan says in commenting on Terry's model, "[L]eaders must pass legitimacy tests in all three areas...before they can be properly regarded as legitimate stewards of public trust" (Terry, 2002, p. xi). Terry relies heavily on Selznick (1957) to develop the idea of institutional integrity, which captures the character of a public agency as not simply a deliverer of services, but rather as also having political and authoritative roles and meanings in society. Protecting and maintaining institutional integrity is therefore a key element of agency leadership that contributes to effective societal governance.

While the term "conservator" may imply to some a conservative outlook and a bias toward maintaining the *status quo* at the expense of progress, Terry actually sees administrative leaders as having wide discretion to pursue organizational change in order to conserve their agencies' institutional integrity as external circumstances change. Terry employs the metaphor of the Roman god Janus, depicted as having two faces—one looking forward and the other backward. This illustrates the idea of a conservator leader having one "face" focused inwardly on his or her organization, and the other facing outward toward other agencies and the public. Conservator leaders must therefore lead their own organizations and their agencies' relationships with other agencies and the public as well.

With regard to procurement's move to encompass ends or needs determination, Terry's framework highlights the need for procurement leaders to increase the "reach" of their external leadership. That is, procurement agency leaders may lead their own organizations well

and properly, thus passing legitimacy tests in the managerial and legal realms. But they are not, as the previous discussion indicates, seen as legitimate leaders from an institutional perspective. In order to gain this recognition and hence significant participation in needs determination activities, procurement leaders will have to work with other agency leaders to promote the benefits of their participation and highlight the costs to their agencies if they continue to be excluded.

CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING OFFICERS AS CONSERVATORS

The evolution of the roles and functions of contingency contracting officers (CCOs) in U.S. military forces provides an example of the application of the conservator model in procurement. A contingency operation is one that requires deployment of military forces in a variety of potential scenarios, including natural disasters, terrorist or subversive activities, political instability, collapse of law and order, and other situations that call for a rapid military response in order to protect lives, property, and national interests (Yoder, 2004). Examples of past contingency operations include those in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Somalia, and Haiti, as well as recent hurricane (e.g., Andrew, Katrina) relief efforts in the U.S. CCOs execute purchases and contracts, sometimes under hazardous conditions, in support of such operations in areas where traditional military logistics support is unavailable or limited. The increase in low-intensity, relatively short duration contingency operations and the impetus to reduce the logistical “footprint” of military forces during the past quarter century have served to highlight the importance of the CCO function.

The contributions of CCOs to the success of these operations have been noted at increasingly higher levels (Yoder, 2004). CCOs are often the principal contacts with indigenous businesses and industries, the continued viability of which is usually a principal goal in these types of operations. CCOs also serve as contacts with any non-governmental organizations and private volunteer organizations that may be providing humanitarian or nation-building services in the area of operations. It has been recognized that procurement considerations need to be included in contingency scenario planning in order to maximize potential for mission success, as well as to reduce possible waste and inefficiencies in contracting. Thus, higher

ranking CCOs now participate in staff planning sessions for contingency scenarios in many military headquarters (Yoder, 2004). These CCOs' roles have expanded beyond traditional procurement boundaries in order to meet the demands of a new procurement environment. In effect, they now help determine agency ends. By their contributions to and leadership in the larger agency's mission, they strengthen the institutional integrity of their own procurement organizations.

In contrast, a different result is evident in post-Hurricane Katrina relief contracting, where numerous criticisms of perceived wasteful and inefficient procurement practices have arisen. Such problems, whether real or imagined, erode procurement agencies' institutional integrity. For example, more than three hundred auditors, investigators and inspectors from twelve different agencies were assigned to oversee Katrina-related contracts in the wake of allegations of waste, cronyism, and fraud (Gruber, 2005). Such increased oversight, reflecting the public's loss of trust and confidence, will inevitably constrain procurement professionals' abilities to use their best judgment and discretion in future contracting actions.

CONCLUSION

This paper has only briefly sketched the outlines of procurement's current focus on means and a possible reorientation of the field toward ends. Many important details remain to be addressed, and several significant structural challenges involving organizational boundaries, roles, and missions would have to be overcome to accomplish such a move. Yet the benefits may be well worth the effort. If needs identification processes are indeed a source of perennial procurement problems, as suggested by the senior procurement leaders mentioned in the introduction, then finding a way to bring those leaders' expertise and experience to bear to improve those processes should have a high priority.

Conditions in the field of procurement may be ripe for such revitalized leadership. On balance, the institutional integrity of public procurement in the U.S. seems more weakened than bolstered by recent events and trends. Criticisms of the post-Katrina relief contracts, along with those of the "no-bid" reconstruction contracts in Iraq and the seemingly perennial criticisms of defense weapons

contracts may have placed public perceptions of procurement's ability to serve as an instrument of effective governance at a nadir. The situation could worsen if Congress or parent agencies further limit procurement professionals' roles and authorities in response to such criticisms. Further, it is likely that morale within public procurement agencies is low because of such criticisms, which may cause some to leave public service. At such a time, public procurement needs strong leaders who will focus both inwardly on the health of their own organizations and outwardly on preserving and conserving its vital role as an institution worthy of public trust and confidence. It is hoped this paper may contribute to the development of such leaders.

NOTES

1. 2nd Annual Acquisition Research Symposium on *Acquisition Research: The Foundation for Innovation*. May 18-19, 2005. Naval Post-graduate School, Monterey, CA.

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