

Defence Public Sector Procurement
a look at the Quality process in this department
presented by
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The origins of modern Quality Management are clearly rooted in Military procurement; 1790 Honoré Le Blanc with his interchangeable gun parts for Thomas Jefferson, 1808 Eli Whitney manufacturing such guns, 1950s NATO standards, and so on. Today Defence procurement has a tough job with the high demands of a modern fighting force, the uncertainties of consistent management due to the political nature of the job and the need to procure equipment from the public sector. Today, the CQI is playing a role in helping improve quality in this sector.

① Quality Organisation

Organisation

The hierarchy of the MOD department is:

1. DES: Defence Equipment Support
2. SE: Director, Safety and Engineering
3. DQA-POL: Defence Quality Assurance Policy
4. SKC:

DES

Headed by the rank of General, Chief of Materiel, DES is responsible for buying everything, providing logistics (including post BFPO) and providing support.

SE

This is the Quality team, the Defence Quality Assurance Authority. They are responsible for

1. Software
2. Experts from each branch of military to help specify new equipment.
3. Establishing MOD policy, standards, requirements, Quality Assurance, Quality Management and Configuration Management for the acquisition of defence equipment.
4. The interface with public sector industry.
5. Determining and maintaining an effective framework for policies, personnel and stakeholders.

DQA-POL

The executive arm of the Quality Assurance Authority, the core processes of which follow.

② Core Processes of the DQA-POL

Policy

- * The planning and implementation of a strategy for achieving Quality.
- * The selection of appropriate contractors. Ideally these are companies with a certified management system, but occasionally lack of choice prohibits this. Today there are concerns about the process which certifies companies; competence of auditors and certification body combined with the degree of enforcement from UKAS.
- * The definition of clear, achievable contractual requirements.
- * The provision of QA surveillance based on measured risk elements. The work is carried out by people registered by the MOD as competent.

- * Review and feedback (PDCA).

Assurance

Both the Quality management and Configuration management (effective structuring and development of the key elements of an organisation) are determined.

NATO and International

A growing element of the organisation is the work with NATO and other international organisations, for joint projects of specification and procurement.

Upskilling

Delivering people with the right skills at the right time to satisfy the business needs. This involves understanding the skills and competencies needed, the provision of a programme of training and the recognition of success with MOD recognised qualifications.

- * The training is carried out by external trainers because internal resources do not exist for the Quality subject matter.
- * A licensing scheme has been introduced, based on specific MOD knowledge requirements, but linked to the CQI Body of Knowledge
- * An investigation is underway with CQI to create a Defence sector competence scheme

Communication

As with any organisation, success will be dependent on good communication. DQA is being proactive in working on improving this aspect of management by considering how to best to communicate. Their partners are Government, MOD teams, Armed Forces, Industrial partners, NATO ... all key stakeholders and partners.

The Defence Industries Quality Forum has been setup (which reports to the high level National Defence Industry Council), comprising representation from:

- * DQA-POL
- * CQI
- * Trade Associations
- * Certification bodies
- * Accreditation bodies
- * Other Defence Sectors outside DES control

The objective of this forum is to improve employee competence of Quality within MOD, achieve effective Quality performance, align Quality Policies and Standards, plan effectively for Quality, develop an effective strategy, and improve confidence in suppliers.

CQI involvement

There has been special help from the CQI through their involvement with such events as

- * Defence event 2008 – providing priority ideas for improvement.
- * Setting up a Special Interest Group for Defence.
- * The CQI/MOD sector scheme, where successful training/exam results from MOD courses can count for CQI membership.

③ **Issues raised by those attending**

Many of the 26 members and guests attending the lecture had links with MOD public sector contracts, both past and present. They keenly identified issues they considered important for Quality Improvement with the MOD procurement team. Such issues discussed by the members included: The importance of correctness and completeness of contracts, understanding the needs of the military, the problems associated with contracts that extend over long periods, the problems associated with specifications raised for harsh environments and the necessities for measurable in the delivery process to know if each stage has been acceptably completed.

Gerry FICE is a member of the CQI Special Interest Group for Defence Quality

Notes by Richard KIRBY, Chairman of Thames Valley Branch of the Chartered Quality Institute

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