THE GOVERNMENT/INDUSTRY ROLE IN TRAINING DEVICE DEVELOPMENT-TRANSITION FROM REQUIREMENT TO HARDWARE

MR. R. B. CHAPMAN III
President, AAI Corporation

There are many agencies, companies, and individuals involved in the transition of a training device from requirement to hardware. The government organization varies widely between services and from project to project within the services. The acquisition process is involved and also varies from service to service and from project to project. Free and open exchange of information between the various participants is essential if we are to achieve the theme of this 4th NTDC/Industry conference - "Cost Effective Training Devices." The procurement system is basically inimical to the free exchange of data. There are many pitfalls to be avoided at every step of the way. Integrity, trust, and responsible action are required of all of us in this day of a "buyers market" and of the shouts of improper action on the part of the Military-Industrial Complex.

The Players

Each training device project has a unique set of individuals representing various agencies who share in the development process. The failure to properly identify and include any required representative generally causes trouble - if not now, later on.

On the government side are the user, the development agency, the budget agency, the procurement agency, and the logistics or field support agency. Some of these functions are sometimes combined in a single agency. In some services and in some product areas the functions described above are divided into many different agencies. Within each agency there are many specialists who to a certain extent duplicate the agencies - each specialist responsible for maintaining the interest of the agency he represents.

The Training Device acquisition process is more complicated than the Weapons System or other sub-system acquisition processes. It is hard to classify the systems contractor - is he a government agency or just another contractor. Sometimes the Training Device is procured thru the systems contractor from a company specializing in training; sometimes it is developed by the systems contractor himself; sometimes it is procured directly by a government agency from a training device company.

In addition to the system contractor and the Training Device company, there are many vendors and sub-contractors, each specializing in some particular element of hardware.

Within the companies there are many specialists who play a part in the acquisition process - marketeers, engineers, lawyers, contract administrators, etc.

The Game

The procedures followed in the training device acquisition process vary widely from service to service and dynamically from project to project. An ideal, generalized model of the process which should take place follows.

In the beginning is the User agent charged with recognizing a training need. He translates this need into a requirement. His requirement is realistic if he has been informed by representatives of the development agency and by representatives of the various contractors and sub-contractors of the latest advances in the state of the art.

The budget agency considers the importance of the requirement in comparison with other requirements and with consideration of the available funds. It too receives advice from the development agency and the various contractors as to the probable amount of funds required for the project. It authorizes the project, allocates the funds, and designates the procuring and developing agencies.

The developing agency prepares the specification and the procuring agency the bid request. They have been in contact with all the contractors during the entire course of events in order to take advantage of their knowledge of the technical state of the art and the probable cost.

The bid request is released to all qualified contractors, bids are submitted and evaluated, and the award is made. The contractor selected, the development agency, the procurement agency, the user, the support agency, and the system prime work closely together during the development contract in order to exchange information and to recognize and resolve problems quickly and economically.

The equipment is delivered, tested and accepted. The contractor trains the user personnel in the operation and maintenance of the equipment. If required the contractor provides field support until the personnel are sufficiently experienced.

You will note that the emphasis in this ideal model has been placed on free exchange of information between industry and government at every step of the way. This is essential. Industry inputs are needed in order to provide realistic achievable requirements and compatible specifications. Industry must talk directly to all elements of the government during the course of the contract. Attempts to force industry into channels during the contract stage inevitably lead to misunderstanding between the development agency

and the user. Industry must participate in the test, the installation, the training and the maintenance. Constant industry-government communication is required for success. Of course, the contract must be observed and the contracting officer must be the authority for action but all must talk to each other.

The Problems

The acquisition process, founded on the principle of competitive procurement, is basically inimical to the free exchange of information.

Each contractor, or subcontractor, in disclosing information to the user and the developer is trying to gain a competitive advantage. He hopes that the resulting bid request will be one to which only he can respond effectively. When performing the contract, he is reluctant to surrender to the government his hard won store of technical knowledge since he knows it will thus reach his competitors.

The Systems Contractor resists to the utmost any attempt to procure training equipment other than through him. He releases data grudgingly and slowly. He tries to promote the use of system hardware for training even though if may not be suitable.

The user is constantly inhibited by the competition with other projects for funds. User personnel rotate assignments frequently with tne result that the user changes his mind as to the requirement. He is constantly pressing the contractor to meet his latest need even though it may not be authorized by the contract.

The development agency is engaged in a fight for status and funds between agencies. Within agencies, individuals are engaged in competition for promotion and technical prestige. Pressure is put on the contractor to make up for deficiencies in government support and decision making without appropriate compensation.

The procurement agency is hounded by auditors and legislators. It is slow to act and refuses to establish realistic contract schedules. It is always short of funds to buy what is needed and all too frequently eliminates the competitive reprocurement data from the contract and then tries to competitively reprocure without the proper means.

Over all, hangs the pull of a completely unrealistic entertainment code. In a land where it is customary to do business over the lunch table normal social business practice is condemmed equally with improper business practice.

Regulations have been piled on regulations in an effort to substitute for judgement, prevent error, and prevent wrongdoing. Still the errors and the wrongdoing occur.

The failure of communication has resulted in much disagreement. The disagreements are being resolved by an unprecedented and prohibitive mass of claims before the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals.

The general public has lost confidence in the Defense establishment and presses for a reduction in expenditures. Industry technical capacity now exceeds the needs of the Defense and Space programs and technical unemployment is already upon us.

Today's "Buyers" market further accentuates the problem of the competitive procurement process.

What Shall We Do?

Let's not add any further so-called improvements to procurement policy, procedure, and regulations. Rather let us eliminate redundancy, simplify and streamline procedure so it can be understood and implemented.

Let's not stop talking to each other for fear of being accused of wrongdoing. Rather let us remove the artificial barriers and restrictions which have been erected and restore free and open communication.

Let's stop pretending that we are superhuman and capable of working without error. Let's be tolerant of infrequent and unavoidable errors but let us identify and remove those who demonstrate incompetence.

Let's stop treating all as if they were potential criminals and remove the punitive and inhibiting overall controls. Let's find and punish the wrongdoers.

If we are going to use competitive procurement, let's recognize the natural data exchange restrictions of the system and make provisions for them.

In all our actions and dealings with one another let us work with trust and integrity.

Let's cooperate and communicate. It is not improvement in procurement policy and procedure that we need. We need improvement in procurement practice.

Postlude

Obviously the problems I have described are not encountered in every program but the pressure of our competitive way of life keeps these problems always in the wings, ready to move on stage.

Since I am presenting sensitive and troubling issues and this presentation will be published in the proceedings, I have naturally omitted case histories and examples. If any doubt that the problems described are real, perhaps more understanding can be obtained in the discussion period.