"Keeping Pace with the Digital Age"

By: Diana LaChance

In a world that is increasingly reliant on technology, we must “evolve or become extinct.” That was the message shared by Terry Carpenter (pictured), program executive officer for the National Background Investigation Services (NBIS), in DAU’s first virtual Hot Topic Forum held Wednesday, May 20.

Carpenter speaks from experience, which he imparted in his presentation titled “Lessons from the Trenches—Delivering a Large-Scale Agile Software Program.” Following the 2015 data breach at the Office of Personnel Management, he was tasked with converting the NBIS from a system-of-systems program to an agile software development acquisition program.

For those unfamiliar, the NBIS is the “Federal wide information technology service which will be used to conduct suitability, security, and credentialing investigations for all Federal civilians, military members, and government contractors.” It is operated and maintained by the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency.

Carpenter explained that his first step was to adopt the core values of the agile manifesto, which include focusing on interactions and individuals, working solutions over documentation, prioritizing collaboration over negotiation, and responding to change rather than rigidly adhering to the plan. In doing so, he believed he and his team could avoid many of the common pitfalls caused by changing technology, poor planning, ineffective communication, and uncontrolled costs.

He also worked hard to create a culture based on agile business practices. Those involved would have to accept unpredictability and welcome change. They would have to measure the success of the project by the value it gives the customer, not the conformance to the plan. They would need to know that time and price are fixed but not scope, and that people should be valued more than the process. And finally, they would need to see the system specification not as documentation but as the development code.

Once on board, these “agile champions” could then properly assess and implement the changes needed to the legacy system and introduce the technology required to bring it into the digital age. After all, as Carpenter emphasized throughout the presentation, digitizing an organization is not synonymous with digitally transforming it—and to transform the NBIS they would need to do more than just put a paper form online. They would first need to convert the process from being driven by “human feet on the street” to being driven by data, to make it both more secure from attack and less vulnerable...

(See “Carpenter” on page 7)
President’s Note

Since we chatted last, we held two engaging Hot Topic Forums related to delivering a large-scale agile software program and diminishing manufacturing sources. Also, I was fortunate to participate as a panelist in DAU’s “Think Differently” Series on Workforce Digital Readiness. Although I am not a software ninja, the panel gave me an opportunity to access my digital proclivity and I wanted to share a story with you.

When I moved to DC in 2015, I didn’t arrive alone. I packed up my stuff, loaded the car, and drove cross-country with my 8 pound dachshund. The first two years were bliss because I lived within a mile of the Pentagon and could walk to work. This meant I could come home at lunch and let my dog use the facilities, eat a Scooby snack, and enjoy a quick walk. However, in 2017, I accepted a position at Fort Belvoir and no longer had the luxury of a short commute.

Along with my new working environment, I had to make adjustments in my schedule – and my wallet – to drive home at lunch to let her out. I had just started the position and due to my increased responsibilities, my work schedule fluctuated, which included my lunch hour. Sometimes early and sometimes not. My dog did not thrive under the changed conditions and neither did my wallet due to the extra gas expenditures.

So I knew schedule changes needed to be made – for me and my dog. I had several options. I could continue driving home at lunch with increased wear and tear on my car; I could get Portable Puppy Pee Turf; I could hire a dog-walker; or I could take her to Doggy Day Care. As anyone who knows me will guess, as a people person, I decided to go with a dog-walker! As such, I interviewed three highly recommended individuals who proposed different methods to gain access to my residence. One asked me to leave a key under the doormat; another requested a copy of the key and my garage door opener; and one proposed a tech solution – installing a Bluetooth, digital key, smart lock on my front door. As a proponent of digital readiness, that solution resonated with me.

Why is my story relevant? In the past, defense acquisition decision-making processes relied on tradition and status quo. Just like the physical key provided me with a sense of security to my house, DoD found security in tradition and proven practices. Although I gave up some personal control by handing over the key in favor of a digital solution, I gained a different type of control. I now have multiple access and customization options. Similar to my situation, as DAUAA works to embrace a more digitally-motivated mindset, it too will benefit from its modernization plans, including website upgrades, increased membership benefits, and opportunities to work with more associations and defense sectors.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter as we all become comfortable with the "next normal," which will certainly embrace the need for digital readiness.

Respectfully,

Scott Bauer
DAU Alumni Association President
News from DAU

Coronavirus Impact to DAU Courses
DAU’s first priority is the protection of our people. DAU has reevaluated its course offerings for the remainder of the FY2020 schedule. The first part of the FY2021 schedule is expected to be released in late August. At this time, DAU plans to continue delivering all of its courses virtually.

New Webcast to Get You Digitally Ready
There’s no time like the present to get spun up on tomorrow’s smart digital practices.
DAU is launching the first segment of its Digital Readiness Webcast Series July 9, which comes on the heels of a collaborative effort between DAU and the System Engineering Research Center (SERC). The series will focus on three areas of strategic importance (ASIs): digital engineering, artificial intelligence / machine learning, and data analytics. This nine-episode miniseries will dedicate three sessions to each ASI. Sessions will provide an introduction, discuss the state of practice and share examples of current use and future trajectories. (Read more…)

DAU Communities
DAU’s online Communities of Practice are your place to connect with like-minded professionals, share your experiences, and ask questions. DAU now hosts over 80 different communities including ones focused on topics relevant to program management, engineering, contracting, contracting officer’s representatives, and more.

Other Transactions: Tailoring Solutions not Skirting Rules
Experts on Other Transactions (OTs) would like to set the record straight: OTs do not allow the acquisition workforce to cut corners.
In fact, to better understand what OTs are, it might first be easier to clarify what they are not.
OTs are not about going outside the rules or skirting around Government regulations. They cannot be used to avoid the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). OTs do not automatically supply a faster resolution or offer a one-size-fits-all solution. (Read more…)

Registration for TEDxDAU 2020 is now open
Join us virtually September 23, 2020, to hear 10 great storytellers share their experiences. Their presentations will inspire you to think about the biggest challenges the Department of Defense and all of us are facing, reimagine new solutions, and soar to new heights in creativity and innovation with agility, speed, and scale. Attendees to this annual training event can earn up to 6 CLPs as they watch these incredible stories of overcoming adversity.

The Future of Learning is Here: How DAU is Exploring AI to Transform Learning
Secretary of Defense Mark Esper’s remarks during the 2019 Artificial Intelligence Public Conference underscored the importance artificial intelligence (AI) has on the future of Defense.
“Advances in AI have the potential to change the character of warfare for generations to come,” he said. “Whichever nation harnesses AI first will have a decisive advantage on the battlefield for many, many years. We have to get there first.”
Fortunately, DAU is already on the job. (Read more…)
July-August 2020 Edition Now Available

In this edition:

**FIAR 2020 The NEXUS Between Acquisition and Audit Remediation:** Mobola A. Kadiri, Anna N. Smith, and Stephen M. Speciale. The Department of Defense has not yet passed a required financial audit. Financial Improvement and Audit Remediation (FIAR) focuses on transparency, accountability, and process improvement.

**The Adaptive Acquisition Framework Better, Faster, More Tailored:** Jim Woolsey. An interview and a closer look at the Adaptive Acquisition Framework with Stacy Cummings, who spearheaded the transformative development of its six varied pathways.

**20 Questions Every Product Support Manager Should Be Prepared to Answer:** Bill Kobren. A product support manager who can answer all 20 questions—with supporting data—will be well on the way to becoming that trusted, highly successful subject-matter expert who is needed and required.

**SYSTEM INTEGRATION Enabling Capability Through Connectivity Part II: Expeditionary Warfare and Battlespace Management:** Eugene A. Razzetti. Do everything you have to do—but do it faster. Often, “Fight with what you have” is a briefing room cliché that becomes the unhappy battle cry at the front.


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2020 DAUAA Steven W. Oxman Scholarship Winners
More Details in the Next Issue (Bios & Interviews)

Alida Coggins  
Rianna Decker  
Brendon Himes  
Savannah Keough  
Yumi Kim  
Sophie O’Neil  
Alison Timmermann  
Grace Tisone
Strategic Parts and Material Management: 

a Proactive Lifecycle Approach to Handle Obsolescence

On July 15, over 700 professionals from around the world tuned-in for the latest DAU Alumni Association Hot Topic forum focused on using a proactive lifecycle approach to handle obsolescence.

In a world driven by automation and technology advancement, obsolescence is inevitable. It is not a matter of "if" it will impact system supportability, but "when." The problem is not obsolescence; it is how we manage the challenges it represents. Robin Brown, Parts and DMSMS Management Program Manager for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and David Greinke, a Senior Consultant at LMI, will discuss how to use a proactive parts and obsolescence management approach throughout a system’s lifecycle to reduce costs and risks to the warfighter mission.

(Click here to download the presentation)
## Upcoming Events

Note: for more information or to access any of these sessions, click the hyperlinked topic description in the below table.

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<td>August 12</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. — 2:00 p.m. (EDT)</td>
<td>Think Differently: Embrace the Adaptive Acquisition Framework</td>
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<td>August 13</td>
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<td>Powerful Examples Live</td>
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<td>August 19</td>
<td>12:30 p.m. — 2:00 p.m. (EDT)</td>
<td>Futures Thinking: A Way to Look Into Your Future and Act on It!</td>
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<td>August 20</td>
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<td>August 27</td>
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<td>Digital Readiness: AI/ML, Common Sense prevails?</td>
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<td>Acquisition Topics: Managers’ Internal Control Program (MICP) for the DoD</td>
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to human error. And they would need to apply the principles of organizational management to bring all of the disparate NBIS stakeholders under a “single pane of glass.”

Serendipitously, cloud computing was just starting to mature, so in 2018, the team decided to embrace it as the way forward. “That was a big deal for us,” said Carpenter, describing it as “a huge leap of faith.” They also relied on a dashboard, which he referred to as “a full-blown project management schedule,” to track performance, schedule, and cost, ensuring that they would hit milestones, avoid unexpected obstacles, and properly prioritize backlogged items. And most important, they continuously test at the unit level. “You will be testing forever!” he said.

Their biggest challenge, however, was providing localized support for the 105 Federal agencies, over 10,000 industry partners, and all of the DoD components that use the NBIS. “Given how big of a shift it was from the current model,” he explained, they had to “build more mechanisms into the system to manage that type of high-touch environment.”

That resulted in the establishment of security management offices at each customer location to support local users and push updates as they are released. Now, where once there were 750,000 cases in process, Carpenter said they are at what they expect to be a steady state of around 200,000.

They’re also on brink of getting the processing time down to the threshold set by law, but even hitting that milestone won’t mean the transformation is over. Carpenter is already looking ahead to incorporating artificial intelligence and machine learning into the process, and as he wrapped up his presentation, he encouraged those listening to embrace rather than fear its arrival. “The meteor,” he said, “is coming. Don’t wait for it to hit.”

The DAUAA thanks its corporate members for their ongoing support:

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