



Understanding DoD Program Success



TWG
29- 31 March 2006

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State of Acquisition



“The current situation is characterized by massively accelerated cost growth in many major defense programs, lack of confidence by senior leaders, and no appreciable improvement in the defense acquisition system in the past two decades.”

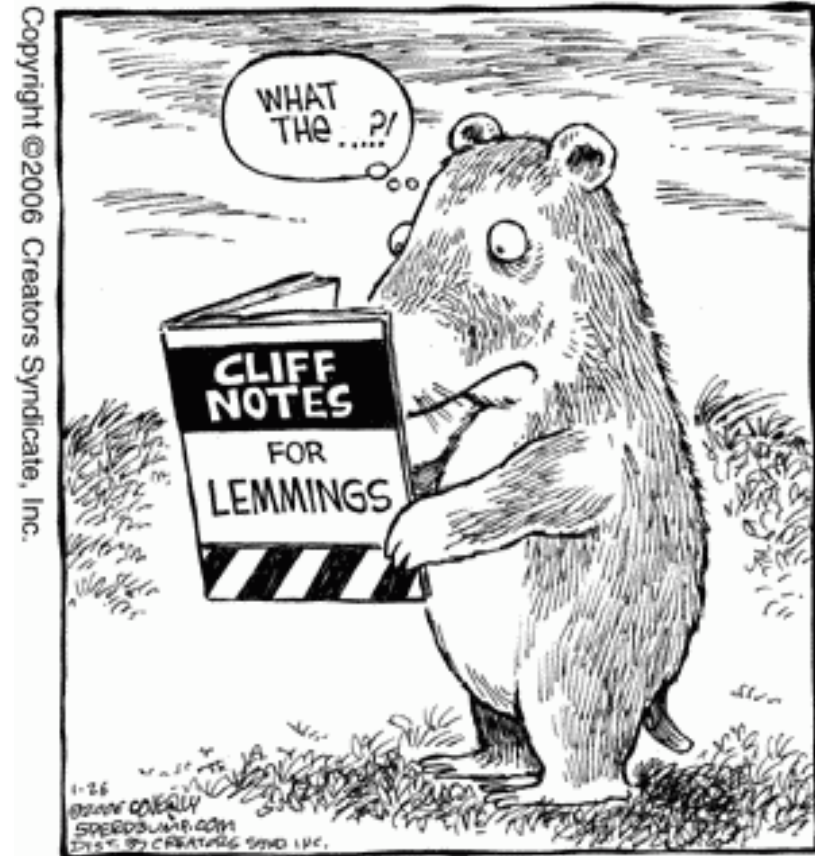
***DAPA Project Team Report
December 2005***





Contentions

**You learn more about
program failure by
studying program
success.**





Key Questions

- 1. What do successful programs look like?**
- 2. Why are they different from unsuccessful ones?**
- 3. Can program success be duplicated?**



**Can program success
rates be increased?**



What is Success?



AGM-65A Maverick

***The program's
opportunity
costs were
worth the
investment***



Success Characteristics

Compelling Mission Need

Powerful Constituency Support

Politically and Technically Savvy Program Team Management

Systems Engineering that Effectively Translates Political into Technical Requirements

Realistic Balanced Goals and Resources

Open Communication of Risks and Problems

Robust Performance Bias

Excel at the Basics: Right Processes/Right Technology

Strong Personal Leadership and Commitment



Compelling Need, Political Support



- **Clear mission objective**
- **Decisive, urgent need**
- **Powerful constituency**

F-16A Falcon



Translate Political into Technical

- **Savvy sys engineering**
- **Objectives alignment**
 - Political
 - Technical
- **Measurable objectives**
 - Political
 - Technical
- **Proactive management**
 - Expectations
 - Perceptions



MLRS



Objective Realism, Risk Disclosure



F-18E/F Super Hornet

- **Defined program envelop**
- **Realistic estimates**
- **Evidence-driven decisions**
- **ERM and cost views**
- **Balanced risk-reward**



Very Strong Performance Bias

**“Build a little, test a little,
learn a lot.”**

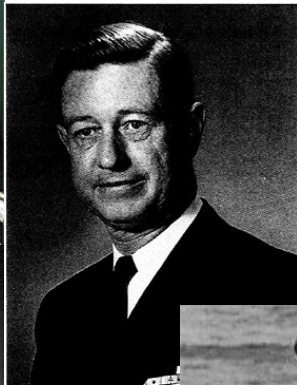
- **Robust actions**
 - Flexibility
 - Adaptability
 - Positive
- **Ever quicker OODA**
- **Doing the basics**
- **Making the calls**
- **Means aren't ends**



Aegis Cruiser

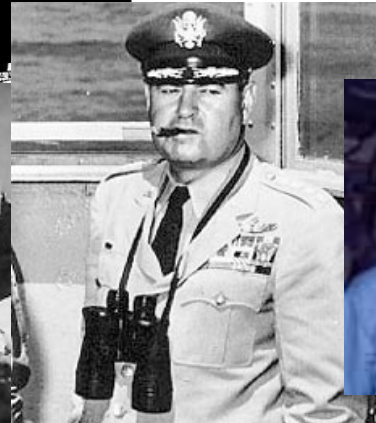


Personal Commitment



***“To be somebody or
to do something.”***

Col. John Boyd





Correlation of Causation?



30 April 1975

US Army Colonel Harry Summers once told a North Vietnamese Colonel, “You know, you never defeated us on the battlefield.” Through his interpreter his counterpart responded by saying, “This may be so. But it is also irrelevant.”



Not Failing Isn't Good Enough

***“A program manager’s
No. 1 priority is keeping a
program alive and moving
through the acquisition
process.”***

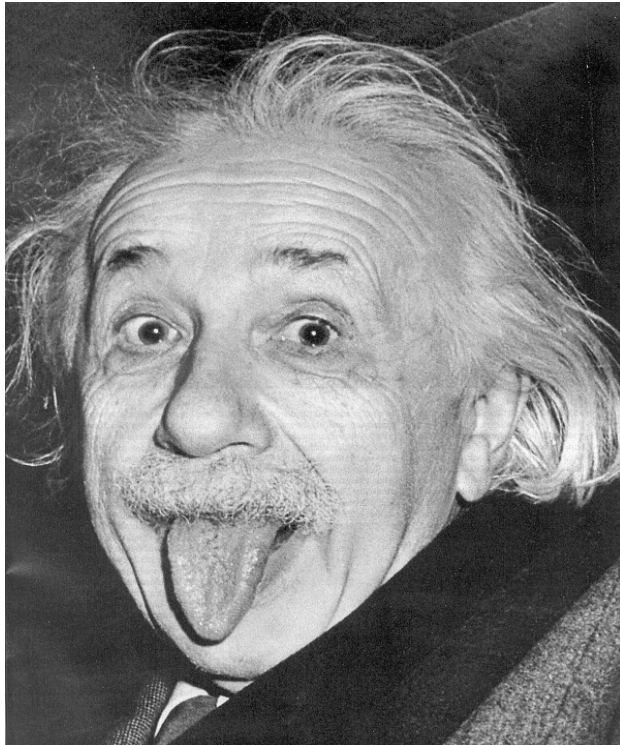
**OSD Acquisition Study
1995**



RAH-66 Comanche



Abnormal Success Criteria



“A perfection of means, and confusion of aims, seems to be our main problem.”

- **Success is defined broadly**
- **Program success is worth taking a risk on ...
... and maybe being cancelled**
- **The needs of the many ...**



Minimize Sources of Risk



The problem lies with Ada.

- **Minimize uncertainty**
 - Manage status
 - No surprises
- **Maximize ...**
 - Stability
 - Predictability
- **Foster responsibility**
 - Information
 - Decision



Maximize Decision Freedom

- **Control is destiny**
- **Maximize operating context**
- **Improve Sit Awareness**
- **Increase OODA**
- **Decide only when needed**



“Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”



Can Success Be Duplicated?



“All happy families are like one another: each unhappy family is unhappy in their own way.”

- **Present environment**
 - Failure prevention
 - Best practice addiction
 - “Gotcha” mentality
 - Do more with less
 - Elimination of mavericks
- **Acquisition reform**
 - No change in 30+ years
 - Capability acq next “good idea”
 - Question of power/control
- **No learning from the past**
 - Successful programs ignored



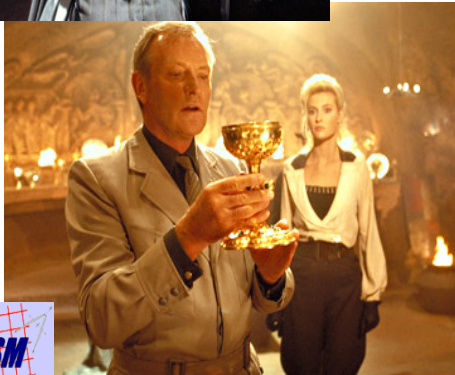
Success is a Choice



Meaningful acquisition reform is doubtful, so programs ...



- 1. Fight for objective realism**
- 2. Duplicate past successes**
- 3. Do the basics**



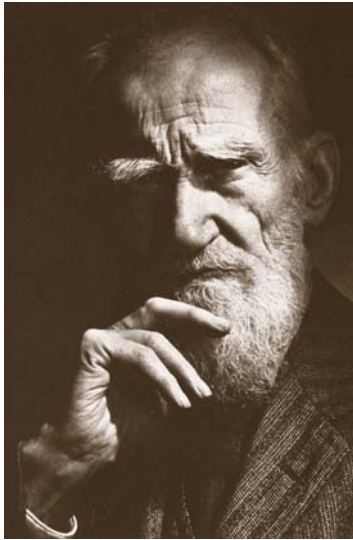
And ...

OSD must create new behavioral incentives to enable program success





PSM & Successful Programs



“The only man who behaved sensibly was my tailor; he took my measurement anew every time he saw me, while all the rest went on with their old measurements and expected them to fit me.”

“Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.”



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