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Understanding Defense Acquisition Workforce Challenges

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Understanding Defense Acquisition Workforce Challenges

The MITRE Corporation

Colleen Murphy

Adam Bouffard

April 26, 2017

14th Annual Acquisition Research Symposium

MITRE

What are the Major Workforce Challenges Faced in Acquisition and What Should be Done to Mitigate Them?

Key Challenges Facing Acquisition Workforce

- **Number of DoD Experienced Acquisition Professionals Declining**
- **Being replaced by younger “digital native” millennial generation**
- **Workforce lacks knowledge and tools to learn and apply breadth of acquisition information**
- **Workforce struggles to keep pace with increasing complexity of federal acquisitions**



Research Methodology

1. Literature Review Discovered:

- Dynamic mission demands constrained by limited budgets and resources
- Budget reductions and cost saving/efficiency targets
- Workforce challenged to think critically to develop innovative solutions

2. Independent Survey Developed Hypothesis:

- Workforce perceptions about achieving proficiency
- Complexity of federal acquisition environment
- Availability of relevant and helpful tools and resources

3. Focus Groups

- Three focus groups to assist in the analysis of survey data
- Assessed tool availability, tool design, and learning environment

Survey Results

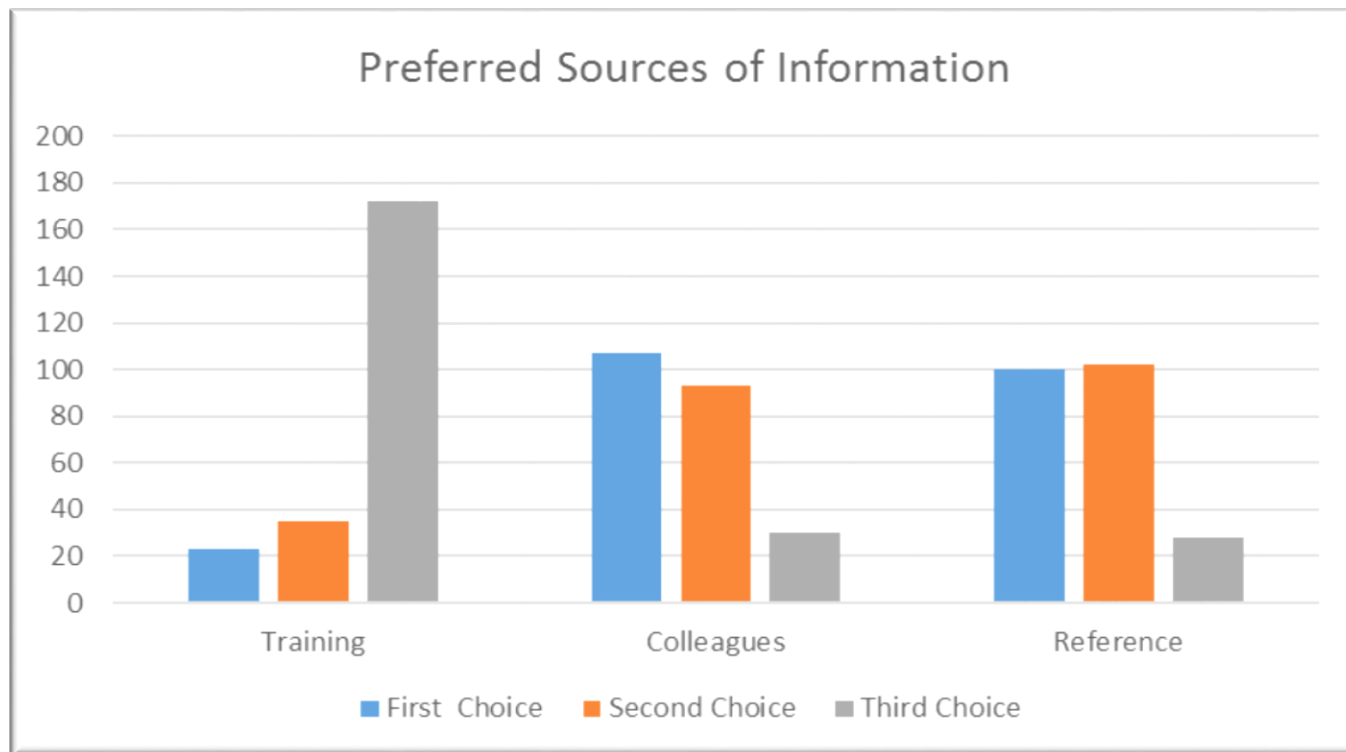
Federal Acquisition has a Long Learning Curve



MITRE Survey of Acquisition Professionals (2016)

Survey Results

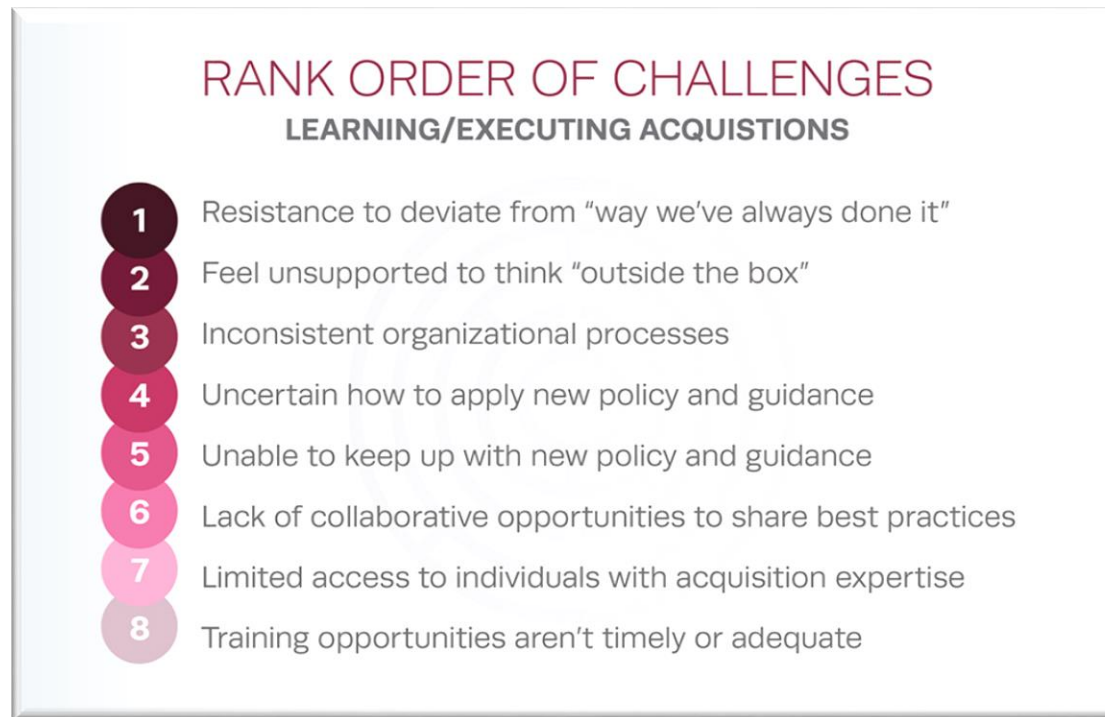
Early Career Acquisition Professionals Rely Heavily on Expertise of Subject Matter Experts to Learn Acquisition



MITRE Survey of Acquisition Professionals (2016)

Survey Results

Acquisition Faces Many Challenges and has Become Increasingly More Complex



MITRE Survey of Acquisition Professionals (2016)

Survey Results

Necessary Knowledge, Tools, and Training to Tailor is Lacking



MITRE Survey of Acquisition Professionals (2016)

Recommendations

- **Digitized Work Environment Based on Modernized Tools and Digitized Policies**
- **Tailored Acquisition Models Including Streamlined Processes**
- **Workforce Cultural Changes Based on PEO level approvals to implement tailored models**
- **Reduce Workload and Refocus Experienced Professionals as Coaches to Accelerate the Learning Curve of the Junior Workforce**
- **Focused Training Around Critical Thinking for Innovative Solutions**

Prototype Exploration and Further Research

MITRE Currently Developing a Prototype to Address:

- **Accelerating learning curve through digital modernized tools with appeal to digital natives e.g. modern layout with minimal clicks**
- **Providing digital capabilities for acquisition professionals to understand mechanics of implementing a specific acquisition type without the use of an acquisition SME e.g. tailoring**
- **Digitized policies and tailored acquisition models to navigate complexities and standardize tools e.g. digitized 5000 that is easily navigable**
- **Tailored acquisition models to more quickly navigate the complex acquisition environment e.g. Agile focused model for Agile acquisition**

