Transformation: A Continuous Process

The 2006 Systems and Software Technology Conference and this month’s issue of CrossTalk have as their theme “Transforming: Business, Security, Warfighting.” Transformation is not just the current buzzword: Many industries and the military have realized that through the investment of transformation efforts, they can strategically posture themselves for the future.

A.K. Cebrowski, the Director of the Office of Transformation for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, stated, “Over the long term, our security and prospects for peace and stability for much of the rest of the world depend on the success of our transformation.” Today, our military faces an ever-growing number of emerging security threats. The conflicts are varied – spread out over the globe, continuous, and longer lasting. We are moving from threat-based to capabilities-based planning. The focus is on effects required – not the number of targets destroyed.

Benjamin Franklin stated, “When you're finished changing, you're finished.” Clearly, a poignant thought that we must always continue to change, develop, and improve. Transformation is a continuous process, not an end point. It has conceptual, cultural, organizational, and technological dimensions. Being transformational implies that we must continually adapt to a changing environment and that we be innovative, adaptive, and responsive. We have to be easy to do business with. We have to be effective and efficient.

Transformation requires that leaders be prepared for change, and that we invest in new technologies. Leaders have to encourage new ways of thinking; sometimes this includes using old capabilities in new ways. Gen. Richard B. Myers, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, “In today's world, there ought to be a premium for people who are thinking, innovative, and are willing to take appropriate risks. If you don't try, and you stay locked in the doctrine that brought you there, you're going to fail.”

The featured articles in this issue of CrossTalk develop many valuable concepts to transform our business practices. These articles certainly offer concepts for more agile business practices, and better cost and performance results: Great information to help us all strategically posture ourselves for the future.

Bob Zwitch
Warner Robins Air Logistics Center Co-Sponsor

Education Is Key for Successful Transformation

As Mr. Zwitch discusses, the Department of Defense (DoD) continues to transform to ensure our enduring success. In addition to finding improved ways of doing things, transformation requires educating the members of the DoD about those improvements. CrossTalk’s parent organization, the Software Technology Support Center, was established for just this purpose. As part of our endeavor to educate software practitioners on methods to better acquire and develop software, the Systems and Software Technology Conference (SSTC) and CrossTalk were established. Once a year, SSTC and CrossTalk join forces to share improvements in person and in print. All the articles in this month’s issue will be discussed in presentations at SSTC 2006.

The articles in this month’s issue include an update to the spiral model that addresses acquiring systems of systems; a discussion on the special cost challenges that systems of systems create; one approach for better securing the Global Information Grid; examples for using Performance-Based Earned Value; and tips to help large projects better use agile software development methods. I hope you enjoy this month’s issue of CrossTalk, and hope you enjoy the presentations at SSTC.

Elizabeth Starrett
Associate Publisher