



12 BATTLE-TESTED LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY FROM ARMY ACQUISITION

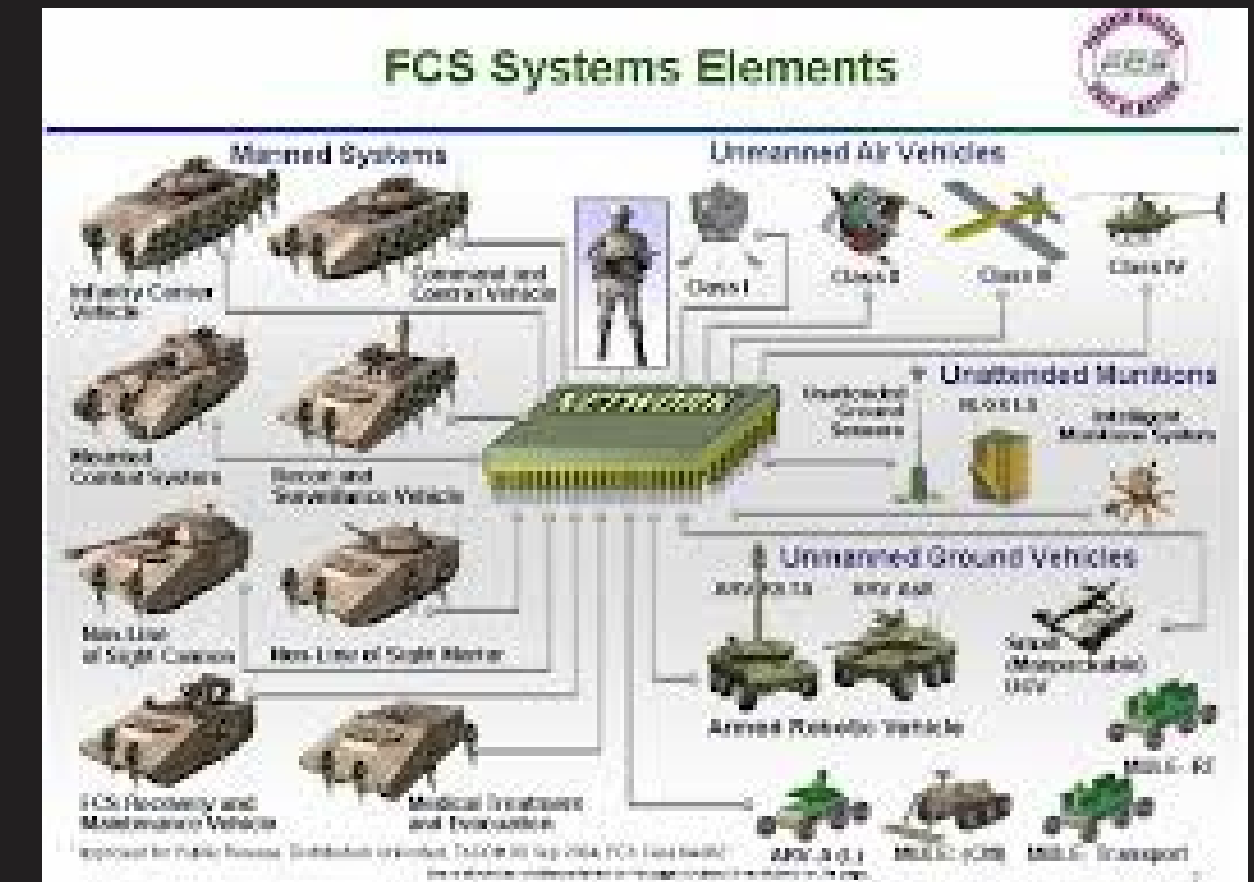
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LESSON 1

Competition is better than no competition.

Competition tends to drive innovation, risk reduction and cost containment.



Competition sparks innovation and lowers costs.

- Fostering competition drives industry to innovate, which leads to better outcomes at lower costs.
- Acquisition practitioners should prioritize competitive processes to encourage creativity and value-driven solutions while avoiding complacency in sole-source contracts.



LESSON 2

Requirements are overrated.

Programs should not organize around requirements; they should organize around customer value.



Flexible requirements enable adaptability.

- Rigid, fixed requirements can limit a program's ability to evolve and meet changing needs.
- Acquisition professionals should embrace flexible, Agile processes that prioritize value and customer feedback, enabling systems to stay relevant and responsive to emerging threats.

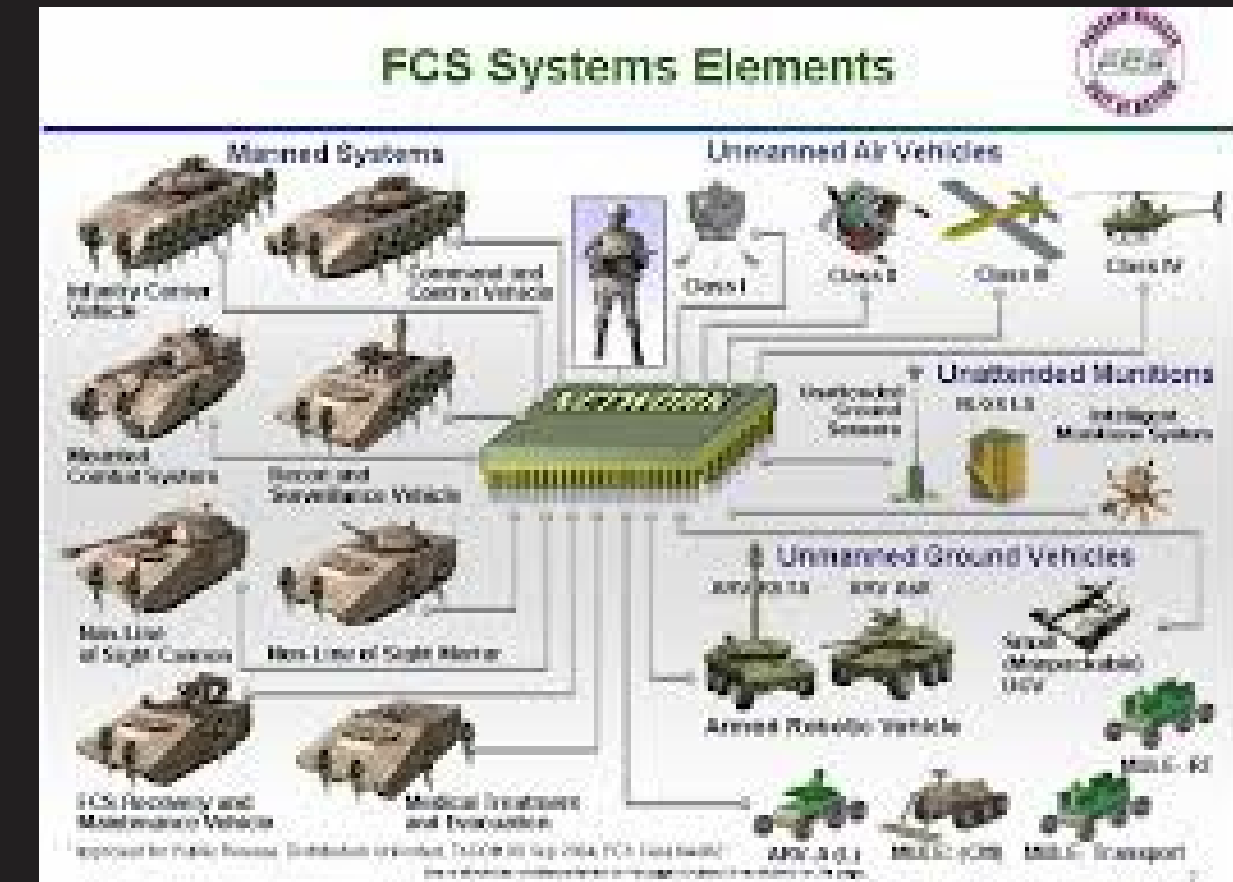


Make the test community part of the team.

Programs that undervalue testing suffer the consequences.

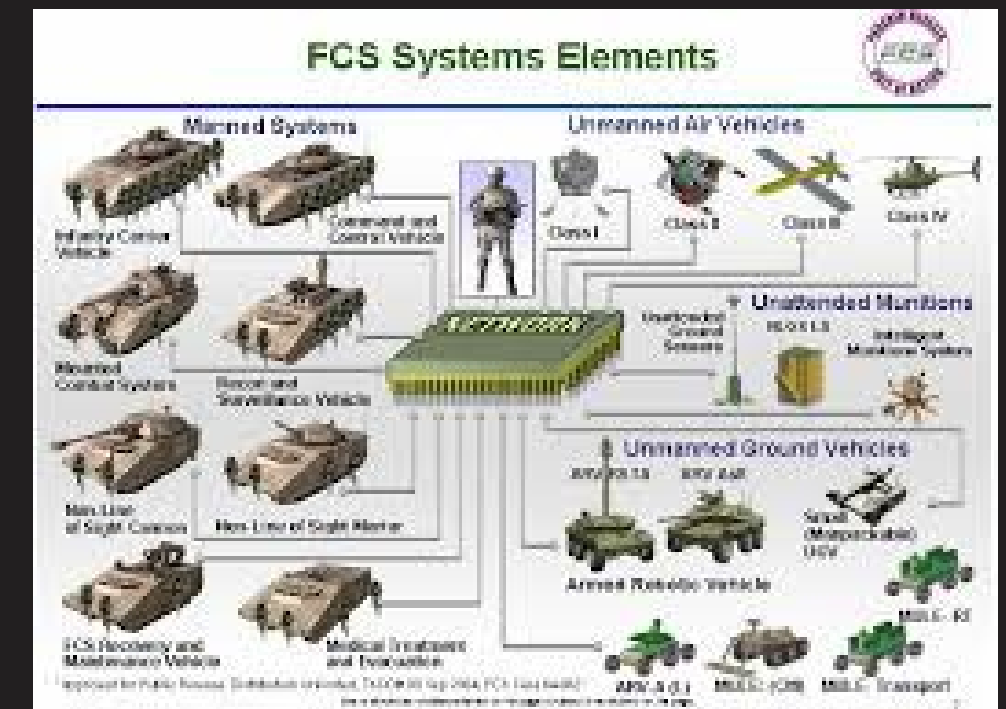
Involve testers early to identify risks.

- Waiting until later stages to involve testing can result in costly delays and failures.
- Acquisition managers should integrate test and evaluation teams early in the process to identify risks and address issues continuously, ensuring that systems are both effective and viable.



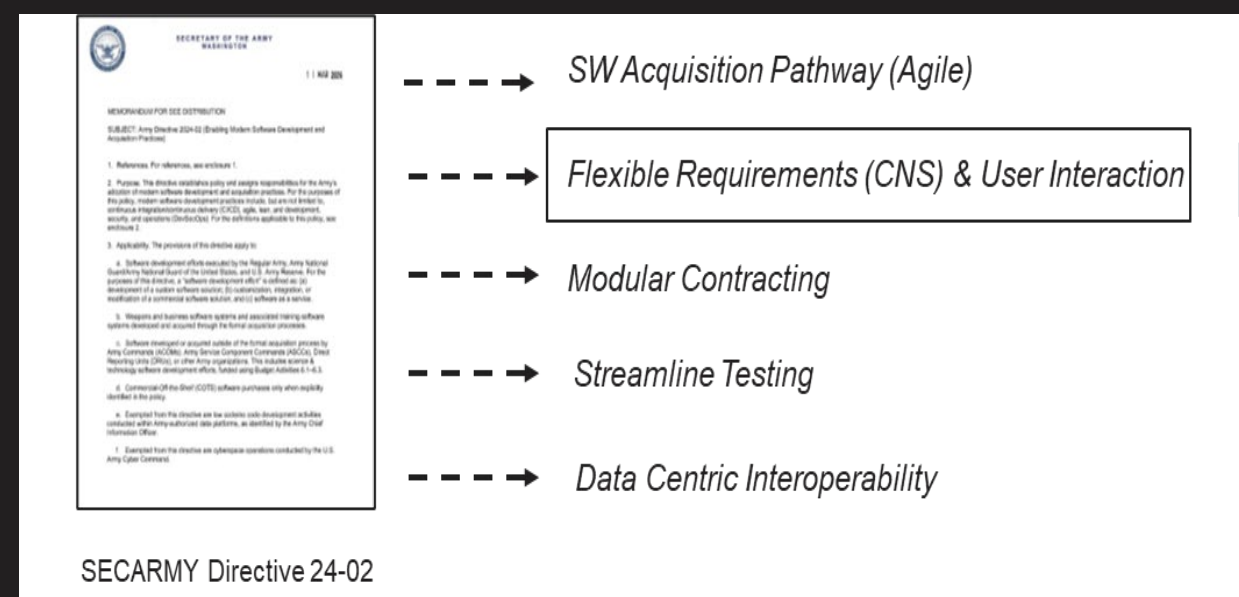
Direct Soldier feedback is important.

Testing early and often with end users has tremendous value.



Incorporate user feedback throughout the development cycle.

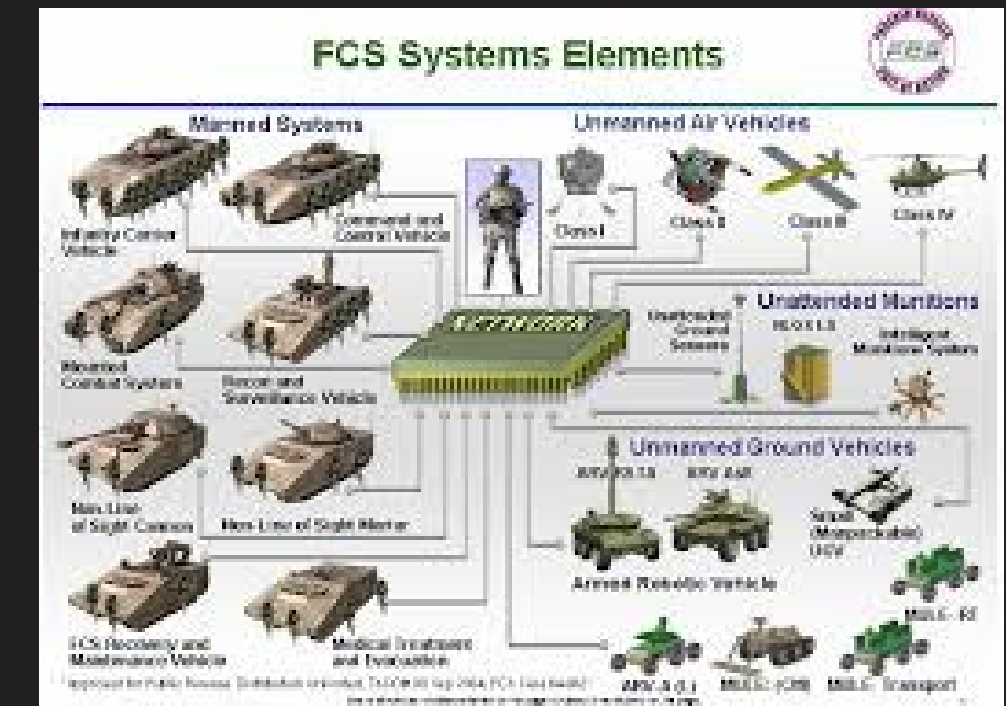
- Systems designed without direct user input often miss critical operational requirements.
- Acquisition professionals should make it a priority to gather and act on user feedback at all stages of development, ensuring that the final product is both practical and effective in real-world scenarios.



LESSON 5

System success in the field with Soldiers breeds program success.

The Soldier gets 51% of the vote in determining whether a program is successful. Are we delivering value or not?



Focus on performance in the field, not just technical milestones.

- Technical milestones alone do not guarantee a program's success; real-world field performance does.
- Acquisition teams should focus on how a system performs under operational conditions, ensuring that systems are not just completed but deliver actual value in the field.



LESSON 6

Most lackluster programs measure the wrong things or nothing at all.

Measuring the wrong things is dangerous because what gets measured gets done.

Measure what matters most.

- Measuring too many metrics can dilute focus and lead to inefficiencies.
- Acquisition professionals must identify the key performance indicators that align with customer needs and operational goals, ensuring that measurement efforts are focused on driving tangible success.



LESSON 7

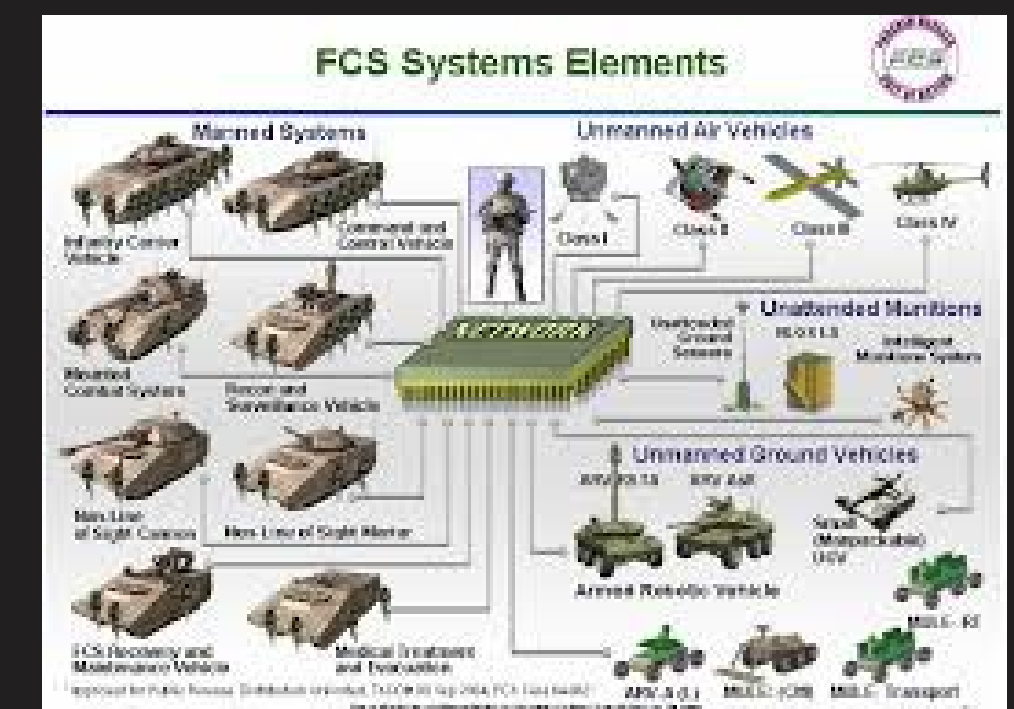
Most program cost and schedule problems are caused by poor estimates.

Real technical issues are usually caused by poor initial planning, flawed design or bad requirements.



Realistic estimates prevent cost and schedule overruns.

- Unrealistic estimates often lead to cost overruns, schedule delays and program instability.
- Acquisition managers must prioritize accurate planning, risk assessment and honest communication to create realistic estimates and set achievable goals from the outset.



LESSON 8

Integration is hard.

Integration is usually the hardest part of a program.

Integration is a complex, critical process.

- Effective integration, both technical and non-technical, is often the most challenging part of any program.
- Acquisition teams should allocate sufficient resources and expertise to address integration challenges early and continuously, ensuring seamless coordination across all program components.



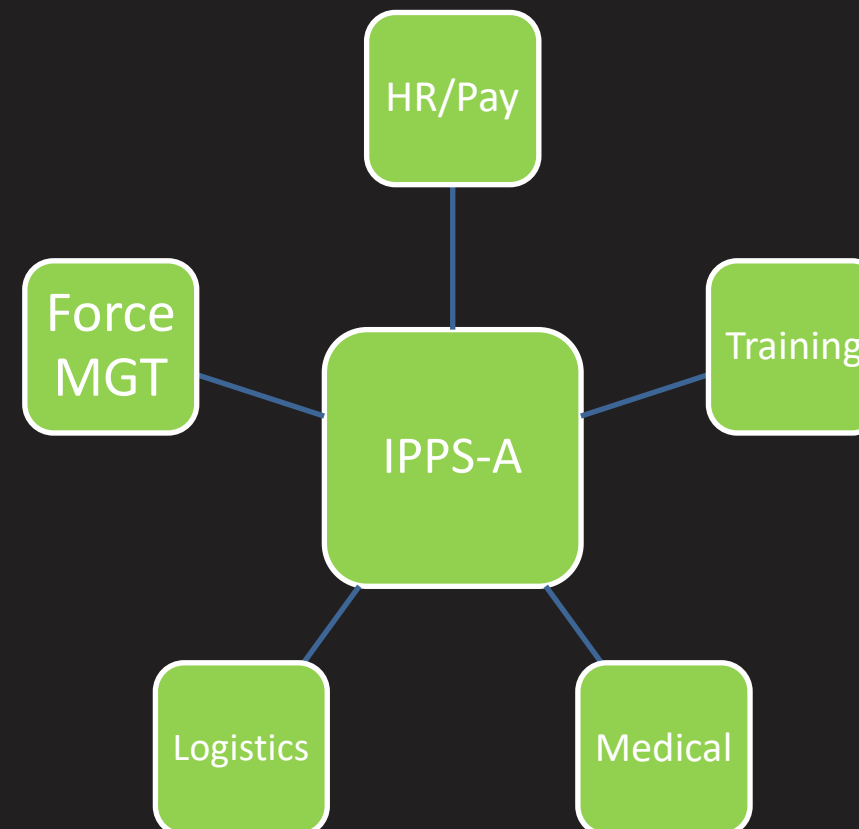
LESSON 9

Data sharing and interoperability are hard.

Agile does not get you off the hook from evaluating architecture, design and dependencies upfront.

Prioritize interoperability and data sharing.

- Neglecting interoperability and data-sharing requirements can lead to integration failures and inefficiencies.
- Acquisition professionals must recognize the importance of these elements from the start, ensuring that systems are designed to work seamlessly with others and that data flows efficiently between systems.



LESSON 10

Technical debt is everywhere and hard to overcome.

We must always be thinking about our technical debt and ways to mitigate it.

Manage technical debt for long-term success.

- Ignoring or deferring technical debt can hinder a system's ability to evolve and increase long-term maintenance costs.
- Acquisition managers should actively identify, categorize and manage technical debt, ensuring that systems are maintainable, scalable and adaptable throughout their lifecycles.



LESSON 11

Strategic communication is important.

Programs that aren't messaged well end up paying the consequences, usually during the budget season.

Strategic communication keeps stakeholders aligned.

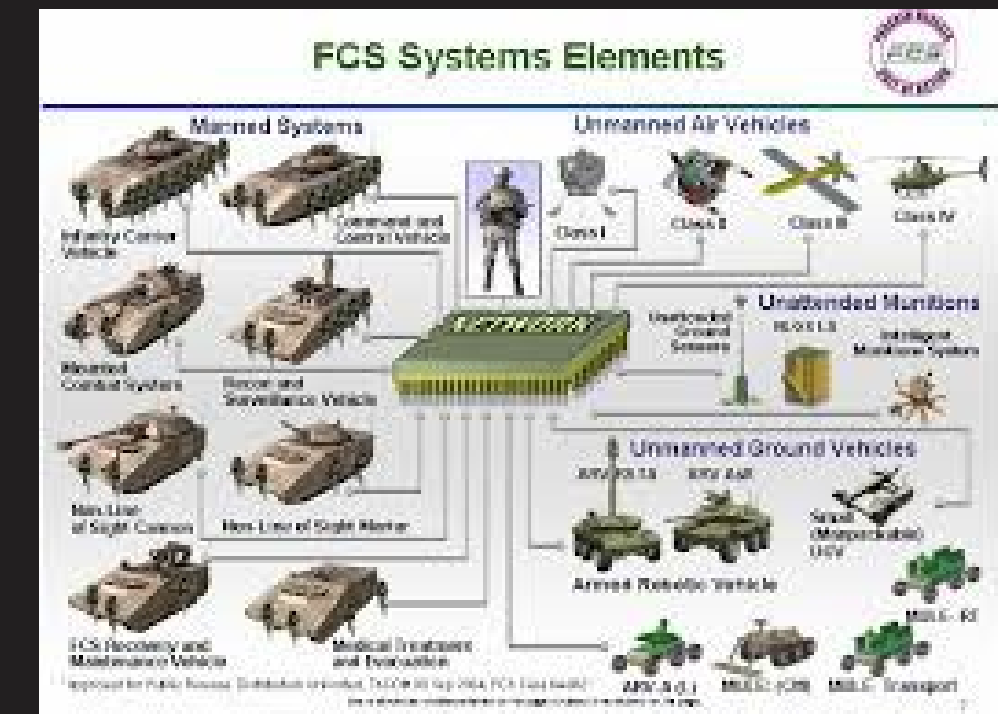
- Effective communication is essential for maintaining stakeholder support and ensuring program success.
- Acquisition professionals should develop clear, consistent communication strategies that engage all relevant stakeholders and keep them informed of program status, challenges and achievements.



LESSON 12

It's impossible to deploy a new capability to the field without bending or breaking a rule.

Challenge the status quo.



Be willing to challenge bureaucratic constraints.

- Strict adherence to bureaucracy can delay progress and prevent timely fielding of critical systems.
- Acquisition managers should identify opportunities within existing rules and processes to move programs forward more quickly, while ensuring compliance and accountability.



Closing thought:
Reform is non-negotiable.



What are your acquisition lessons?

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