

Valuing Diversity

By Pat Compton, DDC EEO Officer

American businesses and government have become increasingly aware of the fact that the composition of the workforce has and continues to change due to affirmative action gains and changing demographics. These changes have created more diverse and different workers from those of even ten years ago. Organizations throughout America are seeing these changes and recognizing the need for valuing and managing the diversity of their own workforces. The diversity issue asks organizations to look beyond legal definitions of discrimination and program requirements as they attempt to create an environment that emphasizes recognizing, respecting and valuing differences.

No two people are alike—not only are they not alike physically, no two people are alike in terms of abilities, strengths, weaknesses and other attributes that they bring to the workforce. You may feel uncomfortable with differences and things you don't understand. That can influence your actions in the workplace. We must look past differences and treat everyone as they would like to be treated. As the great playwright George Bernard Shaw said many years ago, "The golden rule may have a caveat: Do not do unto others as you would have them do unto you; their tastes may be different!"

So—exactly what is "diversity"?

Diversity comes with a variety of variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, age, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, physical abilities, income, marital

status, military experience and work experience. These facets of diversity shape who we are, how we see ourselves and others in the world, and how we act towards others. They also help shape our patterns of communication with others around us. All of us have associations that define who we are, and we naturally identify easily with people who are like us. Diversity asks us to face our reactions to differences and the discomfort they sometimes cause. It involves taking a look at why different holidays, practices, values or language make us feel threatened and build walls between people. It means looking at the world and our actions from someone else's perspective and valuing those differences.

Valuing diversity is a vital key to success for organizations like the DDC, whose workforce is increasingly diverse and whose mission is to support the war fighter. The concept of valuing diversity is one that if ignored, could result in decreased productivity and effectiveness of any organization. The skill of valuing differences can be very frightening. Some of us do not like change, because with change comes uncertainty and with that, our own personal insecurities take over. Some of us are blinded to the richness of human experience and seek refuge with a more uniform environment that is safe and comfortable. Some of us are complacent, thinking that equity and fairness prevail, but they cannot, unless we succeed in fully utilizing and appreciating the unique talents and skills inherent in the diverse people who work for and with us.

DLA GOALS

GOAL 1 . . . Provide responsive, best value supplies and services consistently to our customers.

GOAL 2 . . . Structure internal processes to deliver customer outcomes effectively and efficiently.

GOAL 3 . . . Ensure our workforce is enabled and empowered to deliver and sustain logistics excellence.

GOAL 4 . . . Manage DLA resources for best customer value.