



Left to right: DDPH Deputy Commander Mike O'Brien; DDAG Commander Maj Mark Campaigne, USMC; DDMA Deputy Commander John Stroup; DDC Transformation Office Chief Kevin Cummings; DDNV Deputy Commander Bob King; DDC Command Support Services Director Gene Surmacz; DDC Chief of Staff COL Ed Visker, USA; DLA – DDC J-8 PA Financial Operations Director Marian Ryan; DDJC Deputy Commander Dave Ennis; DDAA Deputy Commander Frank Van Hatten; Program instructor Ed Sketch; DDSP Commander CAPT Jim Naber, SC, USN; DDWG Deputy Commander Donna Fielder; DDC General Counsel Director George Sisson; DDTP Deputy Commander John Heuberger; DDOO Commander Col Jim Reiman, USAF; DDC Strategic Plans Director Charlie Nye; DDC Commercial Activities Program Office Director Twila Gonzales; DLA CSO-N Supervisory Human Resources Specialist Darlene Ferrante.

from brilliant improvisation to disciplined process management.”

The way to begin? With each individual supervisor.

“Each of the leaders understood that change must start with them,” Cummings said, “but research shows this is not enough to sustain long-term organizational change.”

Long-term change, said Cummings, requires a disciplined process approach where planning is crucial and important organizational issues are addressed up front. Some items to consider include how managers are measured and rewarded, how to reinforce positive management behaviors (including building trust, establishing consistency, and improved fairness in hiring practices) and how to identify and manage the barriers that inhibit positive behavior.

“Our long-term success will depend on managing these barriers and perceived constraints, both internal and external, while leveraging the enabling activities that reinforce the leadership behaviors that DDC is trying to develop,” Cummings added.

## Innovation-- A Catalyst for Improvement

By Jerri Taylor, DDRV Commander

Of the nine DLA managerial competencies, the last one, innovation and initiative, can appear to be the most challenging to achieve, especially for a first line supervisor. Being innovative when you are at the bottom of a hierarchical, structured organization with large automated systems can seem a daunting, unrealistic expectation. Sure you can demonstrate initiative, work hard, and are extremely committed, but what about innovation? How can you be innovative when system change requests take forever, new equipment is expensive, processes seem driven by extensive regulation, and your boss isn't receptive to any idea with risk?



Jerri Taylor, DDRV Commander.

To tackle the innovation competency, it helps to redefine the term. Most of us think of innovation as a major change, revolutionary innovation like wireless communications or robotics, but innovation isn't always revolutionary. The Ninth House Technology and Innovation course provides a definition which simplifies and defines innovation in achievable terms. “Innovation is the value-added result of vigorously seeking opportunities and exploiting novel ways of making things happen.” Taken in this context, innovation can start simply by searching for a new method to do work. It might be a quicker way to accomplish a task, a different way to achieve a goal, or a more effective way to execute and evaluate the objective. There are always opportunities to accomplish the task more efficiently and effectively. Innovation is a hands-on effort; it isn't achieved from a distance. Who better to innovate than a first line supervisor?

To be an innovator, start with creating a climate for innovation. Encourage innovative thinking in your work area by listening to employees and peers. What starts as a complaint can actually be an opportunity for change. Stimulate the generation of ideas by asking questions, being receptive to comments, getting comfortable with exploring the issue(s), and seeking alternatives. A great question to generate discussion is “how would you fix it?” Avoid judgmental responses that turn people off. Once turned off, people may not share ideas and make suggestions. Be an optimist and put criticism and obstacles aside so creativity can flourish. Vocalize ideas in your work group, share the end result, and brainstorm with your staff.

Communication and collaboration generate creativity. Collaboration means setting aside competition. Very creative teams share and conduct lively debate without competition. A climate and environment where ideas are valued and creativity is supported energizes people. Successful innovative climates have similarities. It has high trust and openness, allows opportunities for risk taking, and includes a network

of support. All of these factors are attainable in your work unit if you set the right leadership climate.

Following are some creative pointers to help achieve an innovative climate. Avoid the pitfalls of creativity. Don't be afraid to make a mistake; we learn from mistakes. Never assume there is one right answer. There are often many right answers, and challenging your group to come up with multiple options is a great approach to problem solving. For a source of ideas stay current in your discipline, read trade magazines, benchmark with industry, and talk to your counterparts in other organizations. For advice on how to be more creative review books, articles, and websites on creativity. Take some time to learn creative approaches and practice creativity tools. Common creative processes taught in management classes include brainstorming; storyboarding; analogies; redefining the problem; decision trees; mind mapping; and the plan, do, check, act model. To give your creativity a boost, think about the problem during your best time of the day and use visualization to manipulate the situation. Be sure to get plenty of sleep, eat well, and participate in regular

exercise. Innovative ideas come to mind when you least expect them; sometimes when you actually stop thinking about the problem! Here are a few ideas to help change your perspective and get creative:

1. Rearrange or Reverse - change the sequence, speed, or component parts of the issue.
2. Eliminate - take elements away, adapt the task to simplify, determine what is truly core.
3. Modify or Magnify - increase or reduce the scale, change the pattern, modify the attributes of the process, make the complicated simple.
4. Combine or Substitute - mix people, equipment, time, and place.
5. Stop - stop a piece of the process, analyze the problem without a component, and assess value.

The innovation managerial competency is achievable for all leaders at all levels of the organization. Take time to be an active listener, create a climate of innovation, and practice creative techniques for problem solving within your team. Innovation is seeking opportunities, exploring potential, and turning knowledge into value for the organization. You can do that!

