

Transcription

Announcer:

The "Behind the Buy" podcast features audio stories told by members of the Federal acquisition workforce who have successfully executed best practice IT contracting strategies from the TechFAR and Digital Services Playbook to help their agency meet its mission.

Anne:

Greetings, I'm Anne Rung- Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy. Today, we have another special guest for the Administrations' "Behind the Buy" audio series who specializes in IT contracting. Jonathan Mostowski serves as a member of the procurement team for the recently formed United States Digital Services- an organization dedicated to spreading best practices in IT systems and contracting throughout the Federal Government. He also brings operational acquisition experience from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Thanks for joining me today.

Anne:

Tell us a little bit about how you came to Federal service and how and why you became a contracting officer.

Jonathan:

Both Father and Father-in-law are in Federal service

Sense of duty

Prior to I had my own business and was looking for a stable profession as I was getting married

Always interested in the law and improving process

Anne:

What are you most proud of during your years as a contracting officer?

Jonathan:

I am proud that I have had an opportunity improve the way we provide services to the American People

Application Operation Service Provider "Commercial-app model"

Development of Agile Contracting Model

Mentoring new Specialists

My work on the Tech FAR

Anne:

It is great to know that the TechFAR handbook was created by frontline contracting officers with real world experience.

Can you give us a specific example of how you used the Digital Services Playbook and TechFAR to drive innovation in an acquisition?

Jonathan:

Play 1 to Understand My Customers Needs

Play 5 to Deliver Modular Solutions

Play 4 to Manage the Execution

Anne:

Tell me how those tools fared better than the traditional approach.

Jonathan:

Traditional contracts require extensive planning

Traditional contracts evaluate the wrong things (e.g., sloc)

Traditional contracts don't deliver until a year or more

Traditional contracts measure the wrong things: Cost/performance/schedule as opposed to delivery of quality functioning code that meets the end users current needs and using current technology

Anne:

Did you use any performance metrics to prove your success?

Jonathan:

Velocity/Throughput: Track the trend.

Defect Density: The number of bugs discovered during a sprint

Customer Satisfaction: The goal is measure satisfaction over time and to also address negative feedback quickly.

Team Satisfaction: Use the "5 Why's" and other techniques to get to the root cause of whichever way the trend is going.

Value per Iteration: This metric measures how much value the scrum team is delivering back to the customer/business/organization. Avoid Earned Value Management...not applicable in most cases

Anne:

We know that the requirements and schedule for IT systems frequently change without warning and IT acquisitions have to adapt to these changing conditions. Does the traditional approach allow for this flexibility?

Jonathan:

Because waterfall development requires the definition of requirements upfront and the incorporation of those requirements into an Integrated Management Schedule...by design they are not flexible

This approach may make sense for tanks, libraries, and other static requirements.

There is no end state for software development.

Anne:

I'm curious as to how your Chief Financial Officer initially responded to your recommendation for budgeting by IT prototypes.

Jonathan:

NGA was very supportive of Agile

There were concerns regarding budget by portfolio (i.e., tracking investment to outcomes)

For major system development we used a user story tracking system (i.e., associating stories to portfolios)

Same budgetary planning is needed as a traditional contract, but there exist less chance of overruns.

Requires close management like all programs

Anne:

If we're sitting here a year from now celebrating what a great year it's been for you in this role, what will you have achieved?

Jonathan:

- I hope in a year from now we are talking about something else entirely. My goal is to make myself unnecessary.

- o Education, assistance, and documenting best practices

- o TechFAR Hub: samples, blogs, guidance

- I hope during this journey I am able to make tactical difference to prevent major acquisitions from making avoidable mistakes.

- I hope there is a list of agencies that can say "we got it right."

Anne:

It is no secret that many people in the Federal Government are part of the Baby Boomer generation and are looking towards retirement. We need a forward-thinking acquisition workforce to tackle the problems of tomorrow. With that being said- Do you have any advice for millennial COs?

Jonathan:

Yes....find something you are passionate about and make it better

Be a professional, an artisan, and consummate business advisor

Anne:

Thanks Jonathan. I know there are many of you who like Jonathan, are using innovative techniques to drive greater performance. I'd like to hear about your experiences so that we can share your experience with the acquisition community. Share your experiences and learn from your peers by visiting [buyers club dot idea scale dot com](http://buyersclubdotidea.com) and clicking "TechFAR Hub Use Cases." The Digital Services Playbook, TechFAR handbook, and other "Topics of Interest" are also located on the Buyers Club IdeaScale site.

Everyone, thanks for tuning in.

Listen for us next time, where we'll continue to take you Behind the Buy.