

Government Furnished Hand Tools Or An Education In Contract Property Management

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INTRODUCTION

This article provides a description of what went wrong when a major aviation company on sole-source contract would not accept the entire scope of Contract Property Management responsibilities, including the accountability of government furnished hand tools. This problem persisted until a competitive award gave the green light for the government property administrator to approach the problem once more.

BACKGROUND

Through the previous seven years, complex and cost prohibitive written procedures, ineffective systemic correction as to cause and a general lack of contractor management accountability at all levels for property management had been a continuing concern. Due to the complex nature of the contract and its' wide ranging political impact, the likelihood of obtaining government support to disapprove this property control system were slim and none. So, with no other choice, we identified the problems in a general way and the contractor would apply the surface correction approach to quiet the urge of the government property reviewers. Fighting the system, as it presented itself at the time, was futile. It was appropriate to back off and let time take it's course. Sooner or later, the problem of tool control (as well as other property concerns) would present itself in such a way that contract property management and government furnished tools could no longer be ignored.

THE WAIT WAS OVER

After the award of a new competitive contract, problems with tool control began to develop and disclose themselves. Complaints from the Navy Flight Customer about possible mismanagement and loss of government tools resulted in the property administrator being called to conduct a more thorough examination of the problem. There was something different this time; the contractor could not run and hide behind the sole-source company name. There was strong support from different government levels.

The property administrator concluded the review with a report that was direct and scathing in identifying missing and unaccountable government property, ineffective loss, damage or destruction reporting investigations, disclosures of contractor management supporting errors in transactions as well as numerous weaknesses in procedural development and implementation. This report was not to be taken lightly.

THE INVESTIGATION

The contractor's new program manager requested a special review team be brought in to thoroughly investigate all of the "dirty laundry" and implement a contractually acceptable closed-loop corrective action process. Contractor employees were interviewed, processes evaluated and conclusions reached. Organizationally, the authority of the contractor's property manager was ineffective against the sustained winds of other management elements in obtaining systemically effective corrective actions. Management had an attitude problem; property management had a general lack of importance and that was the prime contributor to the ineffectiveness of corrective actions in previous years. Meeting the customer flight schedule was more important than property accountability!

The word was immediately communicated to all levels of management that property management was not to be discounted as someone else's responsibility. Every manager would be held accountable for his actions and there was to be no more miscommunication as an excuse; people would know the rules for government property so they could follow them. If the rules were confusing, there would be established avenues to communicate these concerns from all levels and get them resolved.

CONCLUSION

Attitudes are heavily engrained and the belief that "tools" do not require controls used for other government property is still evident and will be for a while. The contractor has established Integrated Process Teams (IPT) and implemented a process of corrective actions and set timelines to ensure dissemination and implementation of correct information. The affected controls in different procedures have been targeted for correction, training is in process of being conducted and priorities are where they should have been for a long time. Government property has the visibility it hasn't received in a long time and the people are responding in a positive way. The sad part is this is a major aviation corporation, although their primary experience level has been in-plant production activities. Time will tell what type results actually are achieved. ♦

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