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## JOINT APPLIED PROJECT

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**A Work Environment Climate Assessment of an Army Acquisition Center**

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                December 2005

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→→Organizational climate can be described as the overall atmosphere of a workplace consisting of a number of mostly intangible characteristics that nonetheless impact organizational performance. The goal of this Joint Applied Project was to identify organizational climate characteristics of the Army Acquisition Center to provide supervisors with data on the extent to which employees perceive their work environment to be conducive to high productivity. It provides the equivalent of a diagnostic "snapshot" of one aspect of organizational health. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 previous and 19 current acquisition workforce employees. Interview findings were supplemented with data collected from a researchers-developed survey. Findings included the following: (1) high stress due to increasing workload; (2) lack of authority to act and make decisions about the work; and (3) the successful acknowledgement of employee efforts and contributions.

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# A WORK ENVIRONMENT CLIMATE ASSESSMENT OF AN ARMY ACQUISITION CENTER

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# A WORK ENVIRONMENT CLIMATE ASSESSMENT OF AN ARMY ACQUISITION CENTER

## ABSTRACT

Organizational climate can be described as the overall atmosphere of a workplace consisting of a number of mostly intangible characteristics that nonetheless impact organizational performance.  The goal of this Joint Applied Project was to identify organizational climate characteristics of the Army Acquisition Center to provide supervisors with data on the extent to which employees perceive their work environment to be conducive to high productivity.  It provides the equivalent of a diagnostic "snapshot" of one aspect of organizational health.  Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 previous and 19 current acquisition workforce employees.  Interview findings were supplemented with data collected from a researchers-developed survey.  Findings indicated:  (1) most respondents felt they are challenged in their positions, types of work, and responsibilities, yet only 13% perceived that the right people were being promoted; (2) 74% of respondents declared that their supervisor treated them with courtesy and respect, however, 72% of interviewees stated that they do not trust the organization's top leaders; and (3) half were satisfied with their jobs overall, 39% were dissatisfied with opportunities for advancement, and 83% believed strongly that adjustments could be made to raise the level of workplace commitment.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organizational Climate can be described as the mood or relative "health" of the workplace or as an answer to the question, "What is it like to work in this organization?" The response may speak volumes about the company as a whole and may be the cultural reflection of the styles and attitudes cultivated or affected by upper management (Dennison 1996). An organizational climate assessment can provide supervisors with data on the extent to which employees perceive their work environment to be conducive to high productivity. It can be extremely useful for managers to have a diagnostic "snapshot" of the perceived overall health of the work environment. The positive aspect about even relatively negative workplace assessment findings is that management does indeed have some degree of control over this construct, i.e., many workplace factors can be diagnosed and improved.

This project examined the organizational climate of an Army Acquisition Center and provided a baseline assessment of the work environment. Specifically examined were: employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress. Lessons learned from this study can be applied to improve the work environment of the center's satellite offices.

The first step in this type of assessment is to identify the current organizational climate in the Acquisition Center. There are multiple methods for identifying organizational climate including: interviews, workforce surveys, and observational techniques. To carry out this research, 10 interviews were conducted with previous and current Acquisition Center employees (half with current employees and half with those who recently transitioned to different positions within the command). The data obtained from those initial interviews were used to construct both survey questions and refined interview questions. Respondents completed the survey questions on-line and it was made available to the approximately 330 employees of the Acquisition Center. A series of secondary interviews with 11 previous and 19 current Acquisition Center employees

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from all layers within the command was then conducted.  Stratified random sampling was used to ensure the interview findings remained unbiased.  Once complete, the data was collated and presented.

The second step was the analysis of the data collected that was used to establish the baseline measurement of the organizational climate.  Once the specific problems relating to climate are identified, acknowledged, and addressed, regular reevaluation and assessment may result in long-term organizational improvements including productivity. Final recommendations were provided for areas of further study relating to organizational culture and employee burnout.

Positive findings of this study include: (1) Acquisition Center employees are challenged in their current positions; (2) Leaders have presented a clear mission and vision; (3) Workers have high levels of commitment to that mission and vision; (4) Employees have the ability to cope with their current workload as long as they want; (5) Employees are treated with courtesy and respect by supervisors; and (6) Employees are comfortable discussing work topics and situations, as well as socializing with their co-workers.  A number of key factors appear to be having identifiably negative effects on the workplace climate of the Acquisition Center including:  (1) Workers hold the perception that the right people are not being promoted; (2) The lines of communication are not open; (3) Employees do not believe that the organization cares about their well-being; (4) While workers are coping with the increased workload, stress is on the rise; (5) Steps could be taken to increase the level of employee commitment; (6) Employee trust in Acquisition Center leadership is waning.  Results of this study are intended to assist managers and employees in working together to obtain a continually improving organizational climate.

# I.     INTRODUCTION

## A.     BACKGROUND

The Army Acquisition Center relies on a highly skilled workforce to accurately interpret and transact a myriad of acquisition regulations employed in federal contracting to purchase technologically advanced communications and electronics equipment. A two-year intern-training program is used to bring an employee to the journeyman level as a contract specialist with the requisite skills to independently function in this career field. A premise of this study is that it is extremely important that this type of organization maintains and fosters a positive workplace environment, especially given the high level of resources consumed by professional development activities and particularly in a "fishbowl" context of public scrutiny.

While classroom training provides the basic groundwork for a successful career in acquisition, it is the years of experience gained through on the job training that enhances the indispensable skills of a seasoned contracting officer/contract specialist. Providing an organizational climate conducive to long-term productivity is commensurate to fostering long-term health in a human being, i.e., health becomes tantamount to mission accomplishment.. Ensuring the commitment of employees is generally recognized as necessary if an organization intends to adapt and improve its specialized support to warfighters and the Department of Defense.

One underlying assumption is that the Army Acquisition Center will suffer from the same phenomenon as many other Defense organizations; that is, the approaching loss of up to half of its workforce within the next two to seven years due to "baby boom" generation retirements. An additional premise of this report is that there is an increasingly urgent need to attract and maintain the emerging 20-something generation of potential contracting professionals, and a positive work climate is crucial to "hooking" this generation - in short, they expect it.

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## B. PURPOSE

The goal of this Joint Applied Project was to evaluate several dimensions of the organizational climate of the Army Acquisition Center to determine potential directions for building on the organization's successes and improving shortcomings. The specific dimensions that this study focused on were: employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress. The study identified specific areas of organizational climate that management can target for improvement, thereby creating an atmosphere conducive to the long-term commitment of a skilled workforce. Lessons learned from this study can be applied to improve the work environment of the center's satellite offices.

## C. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Army Acquisition Center lost 51 skilled contracting professionals in fiscal year 2005. This number represents one eighth of the center's workforce. This figure denotes losses across all demographic groups within the center, i.e. workers within the internship program (11), recently graduated interns (3), journeyman contract specialists (18), contracting officers (14), supervisors (2), and staff positions (3). Out of the total population of workers who have departed, retirees represent 20 percent of the total number. To provide a baseline measurement of the climate and suggest methods for creating an improved environment attractive to potential employees, the thesis attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the baseline climate of the Acquisition Center in relation to the following dimensions: employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress?

2. What role does the climate of the Acquisition Center play in the productivity of the acquisition professionals working in the organization?

3. Is a change in the climate of the Acquisition Center necessary?

4. What dimensions need to be addressed in order to improve the organizational climate of the Acquisition Center?

## D.    SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study utilized a survey and interviews to address the following dimensions of organizational climate: employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress. Additional dimensions surfaced as a result of the interviews conducted by the researchers and are mentioned in the Data Collection portion of the study.

To carry out the study, approximately 330 employees of the Army Acquisition Center were asked in an e-mail message to complete an on-line climate survey. In addition, a series of secondary interviews with 11 previous and 19 current Acquisition Center employees from all social clusters within the command was conducted. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure the interview findings remained unbiased. The results of our organizational climate study are based on the responses of those participants who chose to complete the survey and the individuals participating in the semi-structured interviews.

The second chapter of the Joint Applied Project contains an in-depth literature review. We address organizational climate and the differences between organizational climate and organizational culture. We also review the dimensions on which our research is based, the impact of a negative organizational climate, and the methods for improving organizational climate. Chapter III explains the methodology used in the study. Chapter IV relates the results of the interviews and surveys that were conducted along with a summary of the findings. Chapter V provides interpretation of the results along with a project summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

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# II.    LITERATURE REVIEW

## A.    INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed literature review to afford the reader an understanding of the various facets of this study.  Background information is provided through a discussion of the varying viewpoints relating to organizational climate.  A contrast between organizational climate and organizational culture is related next.  This is followed by a thorough explanation of the specific climatic dimensions, which were investigated within the Army Acquisition Center.  Next, a discussion of the harmful impact of a negative organizational climate is discussed.  Finally, specific methods for improving the climate within the work environment are stated.  The chapter concludes by summarizing the various areas discussed, prior to the initiation of the quantitative portion of this thesis.

## B.    ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

### 1.    Organization Climate Theory

Literature relating to the study of organizational climate dates back to the field theory of Kurt Lewin in 1939.  Lewin used a very basic formula to express his premise:

$$B = f\,(P, E)$$

In the equation, B = Behavior, P = the Person, and E = Environment.  Lewin's approach separated the person from the social context of the organization.  He believed that the climate within a given system was not created at the worker level by the person (or "subject"), but by some other "agent" such as the organization's leadership.  Proponents of this approach argue that individuals are either subjects or agents of the social environment within the system, but not both at the same time (Denison, 1996).

A possible flaw in Lewinian theory is that it does not recognize that the person plays an important role within the system as a whole.  The Symbolic Interaction Perspective and the Social Construction Perspective promote the view that people cannot be separated from the environment in which they exist; indeed, it is the dynamic nature of

their interaction that makes up the climate of the organization (Giddens, 1979). To take this logic one step further, it can be stated that workers can create (or at least significantly contribute to) the climate of an organization by carefully examining how others perceive their actions (positively or negatively) and adjusting their behavior to meet the priorities of the overall system. Their perception of the necessary adjustments and subsequent actions become a major component of the climate within the organization.

Specifically within the acquisition career field, system priorities vary on many levels; for instance, they can change depending on the type of contractor with which one is dealing. Large contractors generally need little assistance while small businesses may require help becoming accustomed to the intricacies of federal procurement. In this example, the worker must adjust to accomplish not only the needs of the organization (to do what is best for the system), but also to meet the needs of the contractor (to assess the level of assistance necessary and provide accordingly, within legal constraints). Here the worker, through a perception of the needs of a particular environment, has made adjustments to the mutual benefit of the entire system and has, in the process, created a particular climate.

### 2. Organizational Climate Defined

Research into the study of climate recognizes two categories: psychological and organizational. Psychological climate is an investigation of climate at the micro or individual level; it focuses on the attitudes and values of a given subject. On the other hand, the study of organizational climate is conducted at the macro level; it is not only concerned with the behavior of the individual, but with how actions taken by the organization can and often do alter employee perceptions of the system. Organizational climate can influence factors such as job performance and employee satisfaction (Lawler, Hall, and Oldham, 1974). The latter is a key component in maintaining a workforce committed to excellence. Since organizational climates can be promoted to achieve specific organizational goals, this study focuses on organizational climate.

From a more fundamental standpoint, organizational climate can be described as the mood of the workplace and can be rudimentarily determined by asking the question, "What is it like to work in this organization?" The answer received, however, will only

provide a one-dimensional representation based on the individual's perception of the organization's value system at a given point in time (Dennison, 1996). This makes it necessary to supplement this brief examination with a more thorough investigation based on specific dimensions within the organizational environment. The dimensions used to define organizational climate in this study relate to: employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress.

Daniel R. Denison (1996) provides a more comprehensive definition of climate when he states:

> Climate portrays organizational environments as being rooted in the organization's value system, but tends to present these social environments in relatively static terms, describing them in terms of a fixed (and broadly applicable) set of dimensions. Thus, climate is often considered as relatively temporary, subject to direct control, and largely limited to those aspects of the social environment that are conscientiously perceived by organizational members (Denison, 1996).

The theme of organizational climate as a given member's "perception" pervades much of the research; in fact, B. Schneider (1990b) defined climate as, "incumbent's perceptions of the events, practices, and procedures and the kinds of behaviors that get rewarded, supported, and expected in a setting." Furthermore, Moran and Volkwein (1992) defined climate as:

> A relatively enduring characteristic of an organization which distinguishes it from other organizations and (a) embodies members' collective perceptions about their organization with respect to such dimensions as autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness: (b) produced member interaction; (c) serves as a basis for interpreting the situation; (d) reflects the prevalent norms and attitudes of the organization's culture; and (e) acts as a source of influence for shaping behavior (Moran and Volkwein, 1992).

These definitions reinforce the notion that climate is indeed a collective perception of the organizational environment; it is reflective of the needs of the system at a given time, and it has a specific influence on the behavior of its members.

A second and equally important component of climate is that it is a transitory representation of the workplace environment as seen by those on the inside of the organization as opposed to a view by those outside it (Dickenson, Smith, Grojean, and Ehrhart, 2001). For instance, a high performance climate cannot be sustained indefinitely without being replaced by, or at least supplemented with, a climate designed to reduce the stress of that workforce; indeed, the view of climate as a temporary facet of an organization allows for multiple climates to exist at a given time (Dickenson et al., 2001). The phasing in and out of individual climates with unique goals is possible and can be facilitated through the use of evaluation methods designed to identify the perceptions of employees at a given period in time.

Employee perceptions and the temporary nature of climate are two key elements of this study; that is, the researchers believe that a climatic evaluation of an organization represents a snapshot that depicts how individual members perceive their environment at a specific time. Leadership can utilize this representation to implement a strategic decision that will guide the organization along a path toward a healthier climate, i.e. one that more effectively maintains a committed workforce.

## C.    CLIMATE VERSUS CULTURE

Both organizational climate and organizational culture are examinations of the internal social psychological environment of the organization and the relationship of that environment to individual behavior (Denison, 1996); however, to fully understand what organizational climate is, it is important to distinguish it from organizational culture. Schwartz and Davis (1981) put it simply when they stated, "whatever culture is, it is not climate ('one way to understand culture is to understand what it is not')." However, Dennison (1996) provided this definition of organizational culture:

> …the deep structure of organizations, which are rooted in the values, beliefs, and assumptions held by organizational members. Meaning is established through socialization to a variety of identity groups that converge in the workplace. Interaction reproduces a symbolic world that gives culture both a great stability and a certain precarious and fragile nature rooted in the dependence of the system on individual cognition and action (Dennison, 1996).

Organizational culture is usually expressed formally in the establishment's mission and vision statements along with the directives issued by leaders. Culture develops slowly over time and becomes embedded in the behavior of its members; it is not easily changed and represents not only the internal image of the company, but views held by the public including those of its stakeholders (Ashby and Pell, 2001). Culture evolves over time and exists singularly, i.e. the organization can have only one dominate culture at any given time.

Current research into organizational culture has grown out of the social construction framework (Berger and Luckmann, 1996). This framework views culture as a shared set of conditions experienced by employees that shapes their behavior in the organization. Researchers use qualitative methods based on the use of symbols, stories/myths, and quotes in the workplace to assess the culture of an organization. This is in direct contrast to climate researchers who utilize quantitative methods (surveys and interviews) centered on employee perceptions of the organization. Table 1 presents a summary of the various aspects of organizational climate compared to those of organizational culture.

| Area of Concern | Organizational Climate | Organizational Culture |
|---|---|---|
| Methodology | Quantitative | Qualitative |
| Level of Analysis | Surface-level Manifestations | Underlying Values and Assumptions |
| Perspective | Shared Set of Perceptions | Shared Set of Conditions |
| Establishment | Present | Past |
| Evolution | Short-term | Long-term |
| Point of View | Subjects' Viewpoint | Researchers' Viewpoint |
| Discipline | Sociology and Anthropology | Psychology |

**Table 1.    Aspects of Organizational Climate Compared to Aspects of Organizational Culture (From Denison, 1996)**

As is evident from the comparison above, there is a clear distinction between organizational climate and organizational culture. Climate is associated with specific situations and their connection to the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of organizational

members. It is short-lived, subjective, and often shaped by those with power and authority. Conversely, culture relates to an evolved environmental context within which these situations are rooted; moreover, culture is rooted in history, communally held, and significantly complex so as to resist attempts at direct manipulation (Denison, 1996).

## D. CLIMATE DIMENSIONS REVIEWED

The research approach applied by this joint applied project focuses on the measurement of several dimensions of organizational climate. This section provides a concise review of those dimensions.

### 1. Employee Involvement

Employee Involvement is a critical component of the organizational climate within the workplace. This dimension of climate relates to the level of trust leaders bestow on employees to make decisions and get the job done. If an organization values employee involvement, it must ensure that employees know their role and grant them the authority to carry out that role. Employee involvement emphasizes the participation of the employee in organizational goal setting, work design, and decision-making at all levels; moreover, involving employees means empowering them. As Jones tells us:

> Empowerment is the deliberate decentralization of authority to encourage subordinates to assume responsibility for organizational activities. The goal of empowerment is to give subordinates wide latitude to make decisions and thus motivate them to make best use of their skills to create value (Jones, 1998).

This type of involvement gives workers a sense of value and encourages them to invest themselves in their work, since they have been granted the authority and the responsibility to make a difference. Empowerment of employees by management challenges them and provides them the opportunity to be their very best. Carl Rogers (1961a, 1980b) states, "People have within themselves the resources to develop into mature problem solvers" (1961a, 1980b). Rogers' philosophy promotes a participative-democratic style of management that focuses on the inner resources of people, which helps managers make better decisions toward the attainment of the organization's goals

(Lindley). Encouraging employees to be involved is a key element in the development of a positive and participative organizational climate.

## 2. Work Relationships

Relationships that develop between workers have a pronounced effect on an organization's climate. In some cases, they create an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation; however, they are just as likely to contribute to an environment of self-importance and self-centeredness (Watkin, 2001). To ensure a healthy climate, the multitude of distinct personalities in the workplace must be combined in a manner that encourages the sharing of knowledge and experience each individual brings to the table. This creates a spirit of teamwork that gives each person the opportunity to share his or her unique skills. In addition, it creates a friendly work environment that facilitates the open exchange of ideas, thereby increasing the positive nature of the organization's climate.

## 3. Recognition of Employee Contributions

Organizational climate is greatly affected by how well programs designed to recognize and reward employees are implemented. If done well, these programs become a key method for improving motivation levels; but, if poorly managed and applied, they will result in nothing more than a waste of resources. Recognition takes on many forms, but must be in-line with the organization's values. In addition, in order for employee recognition programs to positively affect climate, two conditions must be met: first, the performance rewards being offered must be viewed as valuable to the workforce; and second, it is essential that the evaluation process for acknowledging employee contributions be perceived as fair by workers (Wisdom, 1987). Unless these two conditions are met, recognition programs will not motivate employees to put forth an extra effort. As Wisdom (1987) states, "It is imperative that employees have faith and confidence in their supervisors' evaluations of their performance and the instruments used to conduct these evaluations." Employees must hold the perception that if they go beyond minimum performance requirements they will be recognized accordingly (1987).

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### 4.    Individual Commitment to the Organization

Jerald Greenberg (2002) defines organizational commitment as: "people's attitudes toward the organizations in which they work." It is essentially a measurement as to how happy employees are in their work environment and how likely they are to remain. Greenberg (2002) defines three varieties of organizational commitment:

> Continuance commitment refers to the strength of a person's desire to remain working for an organization due to his or her belief that it may be costly to leave. The longer people remain in their organizations, the more they stand to lose what they have invested in the organization over the years (e.g., retirement plans, close friendships). …Affective commitment [is]…the strength of people's desires to continue working for an organization because they agree with its underlying goals and values. People feeling high degrees of affective commitment…remain in their organizations because they endorse what the organization stands for…. A third type of organizational commitment is normative commitment. This refers to employees' feelings of obligation to stay with the organization because of pressures from others. [Workers]…are greatly concerned about what others would think of them for leaving (2002).

Figure 1 depicts the three unique types of organizational commitment examined by Greenberg.
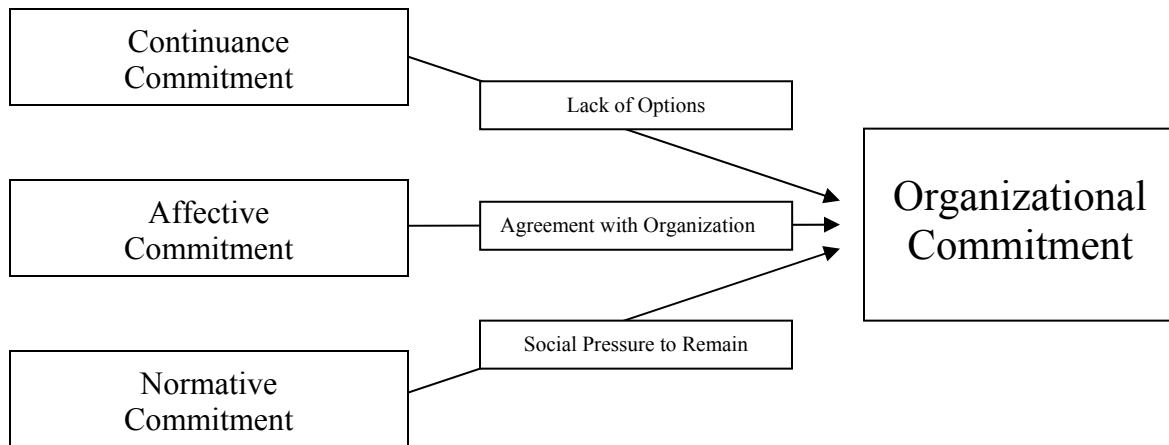


**Figure 1.  Three Kinds of Organizational Commitment (From Greenberg, 2002)**

Regardless of the reason employees remain committed to the organization, leaders can take steps to ensure that employees remain productive members of the organization. They are: job enrichment, alignment of organizational interests with those of workers,

and recruitment of job candidates whose values and goals are in-line with that of the organization (2002). Not surprisingly, the methods for promoting organizational commitment are quite similar to those for improving climate; that is, the two run parallel and are closely entwined with one another.

Lastly, employees must identify with the basic mission and vision of the organization. They must know why the organization exists and what its purpose is. In addition, individuals have to believe that what they do contributes to the overall success of the organization. Over time, the mission of the organization may change; likewise, the goals set for employees will evolve to ensure that the mission is attained. By involving employees in the goal setting process, leaders achieve the acceptance of the new organizational objectives. Furthermore, the new mission and vision must be clearly communicated. When employees understand the mission and vision, they truly commit to the organization and its purpose. Once that appreciation is instilled, employees will accept the change and experience a greater sense of loyalty (Lindley).

### 5. Supervision

Management gurus have been proclaiming for years, "people are an organization's most valuable resource." Supervisors must realize that their primary source of productivity is their workforce; therefore, to genuinely be effective, they must treat their employees as adults, with dignity and respect. Clyde J. Lindley, the author of *Putting "Human" Into Human Resource Management*, writes that the way in which employees are treated and how they perceive and subsequently react to the organization's climate will determine whether or not they will be motivated to reach their greatest potential.

Peters and Waterman (1982), the authors of <u>In Search of Excellence: Lessons From America's Best Run Companies</u>, state that the key to being people oriented is through trust. In other words, to be most effective, one's superiors must be trustworthy. Supervisors should allow employees to participate in goal setting and to be a part of the organization's decision-making process, if they endeavor to instill a sense of trust. This is far more beneficial than merely reigning over them and will create a climate that allows employees to function at higher levels (Lindley).

### 6. Leadership

Creating an organizational climate that values the people who make up the organization is in great part dependent upon the system of communication that exists between leadership and the workforce. Leadership's ability to effectively communicate ideas is just as important as an employee's response to that communication, since effective organizational communication, like trust, is vital to productivity. Communications professor and consultant, Allan D. Frank, surveyed 150 human resource development professionals to find out how well their organizations communicated. He found that there is much room for improvement, particularly in communication between superiors and subordinates. While leaders communicate very effectively when responding to employees' suggestions, Frank's study indicated that they are much less effective in answering questions concerning problems or complaints of subordinates; in fact, after two decades of research, he unfortunately concluded: "The average manager would rather admit to chronic alcoholism than to having problems communicating (1984)."

As with superiors, employees must trust that leaders have good intentions as they juggle both the task dimensions and social dimensions of their role (1984). A proper balance of the two will not only increase the morale of the organization, but also create a climate in which productivity is paramount. Research indicates, "50 to 70 percent of an organization's climate can be traced to its leadership or management style. In other words, good managers create good climates, while poor managers create poor climates" (Watkin, 2001).

### 7. Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction is concerned with the feelings and attitudes an employee holds in regards to his or her occupation. These feelings and attitudes relate directly to the employee's perception of their job and, therefore, have a pronounced effect on organizational climate. Job satisfaction can be broken down into two aspects: the work itself or the outcomes directly related to the work (Greenberg, 2002). In his two-factor theory, Herzberg (2002) proposes that job satisfaction is related to motivators, variables

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associated with high levels of employee performance, and maintenance factors, variables that preclude dissatisfaction when present.  Greenberg expands on this idea:

> Rather than conceiving of job satisfaction as falling along a single continuum anchored at one end by satisfaction and at the other by dissatisfaction, this approach conceives of satisfaction and dissatisfaction as separate variables.  Motivators when present at high levels, contribute to job satisfaction, but when absent, do not lead to job dissatisfaction – just less satisfaction.  Likewise, maintenance factors contribute only to dissatisfaction when present, but not to satisfaction when absent.

This research is of critical importance to leaders within the organization, since it indicates that they should concentrate their efforts on areas known to promote job satisfaction in the workplace (See Figure 2).



| **Satisfaction** | **Dissatisfaction** |

‑‑‑‑‑‑‑**Motivators**‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑‑**Maintenance Factors**‑‑‑‑‑

- Promotion Opportunities            - Quality of Supervision
- Chances for Personal Growth       - Pay
- Recognition                               - Company Policies
- Responsibility                       - Working Conditions
- Achievement                        - Relationships with Co-workers
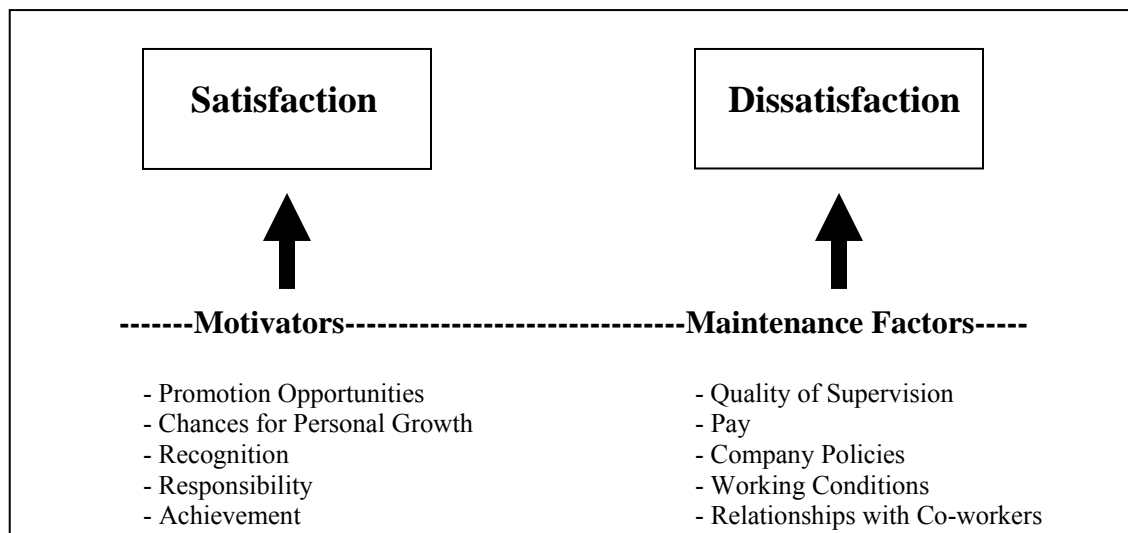
**Figure 2.  Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (From Greenberg, 2002)**

There are several components that compose an employee's level of job satisfaction, to include:  current job activities, co-worker relationships, interaction with management, workload, opportunities for advancement, and the challenges of their current position.  Supervisors must take these areas in to account when engaging in activities that promote greater levels of job satisfaction, such as: compensate workers commensurate with their skills and abilities; raise the quality of supervision; decentralize the organization's power base; and, stress the importance of worker-job fit (2002).

## 8.    Organization's Commitment to the Individual

The organization's commitment to the individual relates to the level to which individuals perceive the organization's dedication to their growth and happiness. This dimension could also be defined as the degree of support that workers feel they receive from the organization and its representatives (Lindley). Employee development is a very specific indicator of the organization's commitment to the individual. When an organization displays a willingness to invest in an employee through training and education, it is indicating the present and future value of that employee to the organization. The powerful effect of employee development should not be neglected by leaders, but utilized as a method of expressing concern for and understand of the specific goals of the individual.

Examining an organization's commitment to its workforce also includes the general perceptions held by employees in regard to whether or not workers believe that the organization and its administrators care about their overall welfare. Commitment can be measured across the entire spectrum; for instance, at the low end of the scale, "is the work environment clean and safe," and at the high end, "are employee goals and values taken into consideration" and "are they made to feel like valued contributors." On every level, the measurement of organizational commitment is essential, since the more committed an individual perceives the organization is to his or her well-being, the more loyalty that individual will show to the organization.

## 9.    Worker Characteristics

Individual worker characteristics play a dynamic role in the climate of the organization, so much so that researchers often debate whether the characteristics of the worker must change to meet the needs of the organization, or the characteristics of the organization must change to meet the needs of the worker (Schneider, 1987a). Hiring practices should focus on a congruence of values and goals between the individual and the organization. In doing so, leaders acknowledge that who workers are, and what characteristics they possess, strongly influence the nature of the climate and the success of the organization (1987a).

One of the most important worker characteristics in relation to organizational climate is locus of control. Individuals with an internal locus of control feel that they have control over their life and the success that they achieve; whereas, individuals with an external locus of control commonly experience a feeling of powerlessness and being out of control. This is significant because internally focused workers are more likely to feel that performance leads to outcome, and therefore tend to take a participatory role at work (Drakeley and Furnham, 1993). They believe that they are the masters of their own destiny and that the efforts that they make directly result in either positive or negative outcomes. Moreover, internally oriented employees tend to perform better, do well in situations requiring high participation, and exert greater effort toward attaining the jobs they want (1993). On the other hand, externally orientated individuals typically do not effectively self-manage their own careers because they feel that their place in life is determined by others and therefore left up to fate. Since externals do not see the strong correlation between performance and results that internals see, they are not typically motivated to succeed; therefore, they perform better in conditions of low participation (1993).

More specifically, Spector (1982) points out six relevant job characteristics that are affected by employees' locus of control: motivation, job performance, job satisfaction, leadership, job perception, and turnover. Several of the factors Spector emphasizes as being affected by an individual's locus of control have also been identified as key factors in the composition of an organization's climate. Since it is clear that there is a strong correlation between climate and an employee's perception of their control over a situation, this study examines this dimension and its effect within the Acquisition Center.

### 10. Job Stress

Jerald Greenberg (2002) describes a stressful situation as an "external event (beyond our control) that creates extreme demands on us." Furthermore, in Organizational Stress and Preventative Management, James C. Quick and Jonathan D. Quick (1984) state, "Any demand, either of a physical or psychological nature, encountered in the course of living is known as a stressor" (3). They go on to say:

Organizational stressors which generate demands for the employee can be classified into four primary categories: Task demands [the deadline and decision-making responsibilities which the individual has at work], role demands [the expectations that others have of the individual's behavior as well as confusion associated with work requirements], physical demands [the extremes of temperature and the design of one's working environment], and interpersonal demands [dealing with social status incongruence and dealing with abrasive personalities at work] (1984).

Stress associated with these demands can be produced by both positive and negative events in an individual's life; the physiological response by the body is the same in either case. It is important to mention that these stressors are cumulative and, if not relieved, may bring serious health conditions. It should also be noted that stress does not always lead to ill effects; in fact, when there is too little stress, performance will be less than optimum (Pulat, 1992). Moreover, some stress is normal, providing people with energy and motivation to meet daily challenges. A normal amount of stress may allow us to "rise to a challenge." However, since not having enough stress in our lives is rarely a problem, the challenge to organizations is to minimize the amount of stress that workers are subjected to during the course of their daily routines (Cooper and Cartwright, 1994).

Individuals commonly experience stress as a feeling of powerlessness and of being out of control; therefore, individuals with an external locus of control are more greatly affected by stress in an organization that discourages participation and autonomy than individuals with an internal locus of control in the same setting. Research has suggested that the perceived control over a situation is an advantage in managing environmental stress agents. Researchers have found that stress becomes a problem when psychological anguish is high and morale is low. Although, particular employee characteristics, such as locus of control, may be a key determinant of the distress suffered in a particular situation, a positive organizational climate can play a critical role in buffering employees from pressures at work (Bateman, 1996). Figure 3 shows the effect of organizational climate and job stressors on employee behavior.

Organizational Climate          Job Stressors          Employee Behavior

**Figure 3.  Conditions within Organizational Climate Produce Stress that Negatively Effects Employee Behavior (From Hemingway and Smith, 1999)**

## E.      AREAS AFFECTED BY ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Research supports the correlation between the factors that make-up the organizational climate and productivity.  Positive, or healthy, organizational climates: stimulate employee involvement, encourage responsibility, recognize valuable employee contributions, strengthen individual commitment to the organization, and promote low levels of job stress.  Healthy organizations also possess supportive supervisors, trustworthy leaders, highly levels of job satisfaction, and a solid organizational commitment to their employees.  On the other hand, the impact of a negative organizational climate can be detrimental, not only to individual employees, but, to the entire organization and its mission.  Figure 4 represents the cause and effect relationship between the climatic dimensions evaluated and the progressive influence on the organizational climate.
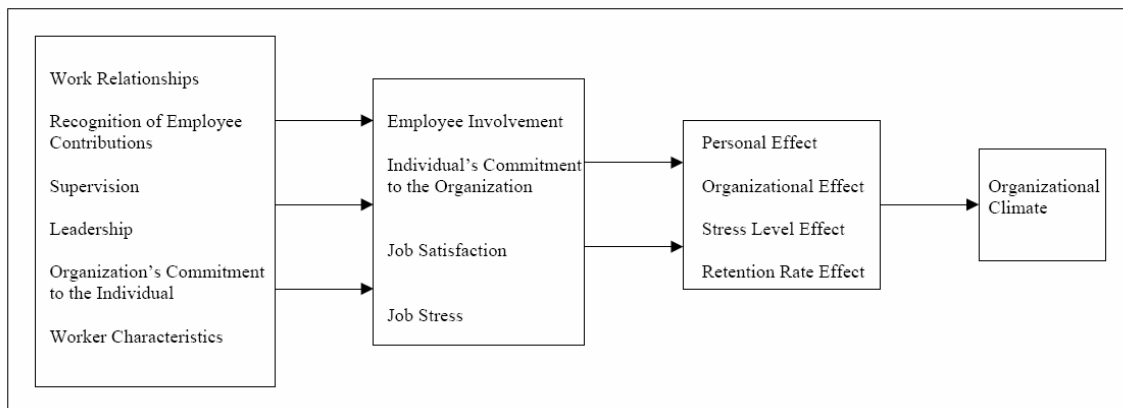


**Figure 4.  Cause and Effect Model Depicting Climatic Dimensions as Determinants of Organizational Climate**

21

### 1. Effects on the Workforce

A negative organizational climate is characterized by a lack of challenging assignments and insufficient authority to take on any real responsibility on the job. This creates an atmosphere in which employees believe that they are not viewed as valued contributors. A climate such as this stifles individual performance. When employee input is not valued, individuals begin to feel that their work situation is completely out of their control. Instead of promoting a positive "can-do" attitude, a negative climate lowers overall morale and decreases job satisfaction.

In negative climates, people are less likely to share knowledge with coworkers for fear that they may be incorrect or because they feel the need to project an air of self-importance by hoarding what they know. Instead of friendly interaction, based on teamwork to accomplish the mission of the organization, people tend to create relationships founded on a shared sense of negativity and cynicism that results from working for an organization that does not care about their contribution or their well-being (Lindley).

Since workers view the organizational climate as being established through the decisions of leaders, employees working in a negative climate tend to perceive an "us vs. them" environment. Employees view the rules management enacts as a means of controlling their every action. Workers believe that management does not trust them and is, therefore, the enemy. In this scenario, most employees cease thinking that management views them as productive individuals with growth potential; it is at this point that motivation levels drop and performance declines (Watkin, 2001).

A mistrust of management permeates all levels of the organization and negatively affects how recognition programs are viewed. Whether valid or not, this lack of trust creates a perception that rewards are not given out in a fair manner, i.e. as a direct result of excellent performance. If this perception continues unaltered, management loses the power to motivate the workforce through recognition of any kind (2001).

### 2. Effects on the Organization

A negative climate can have a dire organizational impact; indeed, the entire organization will suffer if employees are not motivated to perform at high levels and are

not given the necessary authority to be productive. In addition, if employees do not believe that leadership is committed to improving performance at the organizational level, then there is no reason for employees to strive for success within their jobs on a personal level. This tends to create a snowball effect in which employees' perceptions of their worth in the organization and in the ability of their managers deteriorate. Likewise, as supervisors' perceptions in relation to the commitment levels of the workforce decline, the overall effectiveness of the entire organization plummets.

Communication within an unhealthy organizational climate tends to suffer greatly. This is a direct result of a lack of receptiveness to feedback between senders and receivers. Leaders need to encourage two-way communication between workers and supervisors to ensure that employees at all levels feel that they are being treated as trustworthy adults, who can handle responsibility. When this occurs, the performance and productivity of the organization will improve, which will be reflected by the improved climate.

A lack of trust can often cause the proliferation of an unhealthy organizational climate; furthermore, negative climates lower levels of trust within an organization thereby creating a snowball effect. Trust is a two-way street: leaders must display trust in workers and workers must have faith in their leaders (Peters and Waterman, 1982). By trusting one another, supervisors and employees build a true team, one based on the mutual cooperation of all individuals. Without trust and support, a great deal of unnecessary strain and stress will continue to exist within the organization.

### 3. Effects on Stress Levels

Stress has been labeled "the Black Plague of the Nineties." This is due to the tremendous amount of resources that are lost every year as a result of illnesses relating to stress. It has been estimated that, through absenteeism, stress is responsible for the loss of 550 million working days per year; 54% of these absences are in some way related to stress (Cooper and Cartwright, 1994). In addition, stress has been linked to the increased incidence of coronary heart disease, mental breakdown, poor health behaviors, job dissatisfaction, accidents, certain forms of cancer, and family problems (1994). In *Healthy Mind, Healthy Organization – A Proactive Approach to Occupational Stress*,

Cooper and Cartwright (1994) state, "the total cost of stress to American organizations assessed by absenteeism, reduced productivity, compensation claims, health insurance and direct medical expenses now adds up to more than $150 billion a year." A quick review of these figures makes it easy to see why many companies have embarked on programs designed to reduce stress.

Stress is often unintentionally built into a company's climate. Greenberg (2002), references a nationwide survey performed in the life insurance industry, offering the following stress statistics: "46 percent of American workers believe their jobs are highly stressful, and for 27 percent, work was the single greatest source of stress." In many cases, this climatic buildup of stress happens as a result of a lack of trust in and by management, poor communication across all organizational levels, lack of organizational commitment, and a failure to invest in the development of employees. The bottom line is that highly stressed employees cannot perform at an optimum level; therefore, the organization cannot perform at an optimum level. Moreover, it is essential that both leaders and workers cooperate in order to reduce the levels of stress inherent within the climate of an organization.

## 4.    Effects on Retention Rate

A 2005 Pricewaterhouse Coopers survey reports that the retention of key workers was the number one concern of top American CEOs; indeed, the need to retain an organization's best talent was listed as a key factor for success 87% of the time (2005). The reason retention is of such critical concern is due to the large outlay of both time and money made by employers in the training and development of their workforce. David Sirota (2005) tells us: "On average, the cost of losing an employee is about 150 percent. It's one-and-a-half times the person's compensation." Companies cannot remain profitable with this large an investment walking out the door with little or no return.

### a.    The Psychology of Retention

The Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Theory states that individuals whose values are most closely aligned with that of the organization become the workers

most likely to continue employment with the firm.    Specifically, Keeney, Snell, Robinson, Svyantek, and Bott (2004) state:

> ASA Theory proposes that organizations reflect the goals and values of their founders, and therefore tend to attract and retain individuals whose personal goals and values match those of the organization.  Among all applicants, those most similar to an organization are more likely to join and flourish.  In contrast, persons whose personalities and values provide a poor fit with those of the organization, either because they never matched or through change, will tend to avoid membership or rapidly depart (Keeney et al., 2004).

An investigation the three phases of this theory reveals that there are implications for both individuals and organizations.  In the Attraction Phase, individuals should conscientiously evaluate the congruence between their goals and values and those of the organization.  The more closely the two are in-line the more likely the individual will remain with the organization over the long-term.  Likewise, in the Selection Phase, an investigation by the organization of a candidate's goals and values will generally insure the hiring of an individual whose relationship with the organization will endure. Lastly, the Attrition Phase purports that employees will voluntarily or involuntarily depart the organization if a significant shift takes place either in the goals and values of the individual or in the organization (Keeney et al., 2004).

If we view this idea through the lens of the interactionist, we see the relative importance of the worker-job fit.  Keeney et al. (2004) stated, "Interactional Psychology is concerned with the person-situation engagement, and acknowledges that *both* the person (e.g. personality traits) and the environment (e.g. the situation) impact to produce behavior."  Interactional Psychology supports the importance of a consistent person-situation fit; furthermore, ASA Theory proclaims the need for the goals and values of the individual and organization to be congruent.  Therefore, if the continuing aim of the organization is to retain a stable workforce, a climate that takes into consideration the mutual goals and values of both the organization and the individual must be fostered.  Figure 5 illustrates the relationship of Interactional Psychology and ASA Theory.
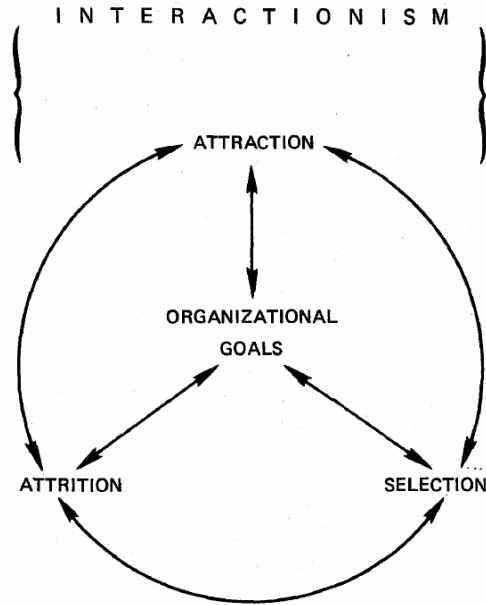
**Figure 5. Interactionism and ASA Theory (From Schneider, 1990)**

### b. Dynamics that Effect Retention Rates

The top six reasons employees leave an organization are: a loss of faith in management, feeling unappreciated, feeling bored or unchallenged, a highly politicized or bureaucratic workplace, feeling used or exploited, and departure or retirement of a close colleague. Table 2 lists these reasons and the percentages in which they occur.

| DYNAMIC | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|
| Loss of Faith in Management | 74 |
| Feeling Unappreciated | 67 |
| Feeling Bored or Unchallenged | 54 |
| A Highly Politicized or Bureaucratic Workplace | 50 |
| Feeling Used or Exploited | 41 |
| Departure or Retirement of a Close Colleague | 30 |

**Table 2. Percentages of Key Employees Who Listed Each Dynamic as a Reason for Resigning (From Ashby and Pell, 2001)**

The most significant reason employees quit their jobs is a loss of faith in the management of the organization. In years past, workers were more tolerant of

behavior that today is seen as politically incorrect or downright backhanded; moreover, individuals quickly conclude that the transgressions of managers are unacceptable. Workers are unwilling to chance tarnishing their reputations through the association with an unscrupulous individual or firm (Ashby and Pell, 2001). Never has this been more evident than in the wake of the scandals within Arthur-Andersen and WorldCom. While these are two extreme examples, the reactions of the swindled employees are comparable to the behavior of the general employee population in respect to the lack of tolerance for the indiscretions of management. Leadership must remain vigilant to insure that its entire workforce is operating in an ethical manner; in addition, the provision of ethics training and ethics counselors will assist leaders in eliminating the "gray" areas that so often escalate into major dilemmas for managers.

William James stated, "The deepest urge in human nature is the craving to feel appreciated." Managers must take this sentiment to heart in relation to the employees within their span of control. It is important that workers truly feel that the job they do is worthwhile and important to the long-term success of the enterprise. It is the duty of leadership to sincerely express their appreciation for the efforts of their employees. This can be accomplished through verbal praise, awards, or monetary rewards (Ashby and Pell, 2001). Nowhere is this more important than in the Department of Defense where the lives of our nation's Warfighters depend on the active management of organizational climate.

It is important that workers feel challenged in their positions. Too often high performing employees become mired in routine activities that waste their talents and sap their energy. If allowed to persist, these individuals will begin to look for other jobs outside the firm for relief. Providing workers a reprieve from these tasks in the form of interdepartmental transfers, job enrichment, or promotion opportunities will ensure that these employees remain continually challenged and performing at their peak (Ashby and Pell, 2001). Management's goal should be to create a climate that fosters innovation and remains stimulating for workers over the long-term.

In an informal survey, 75 percent of the respondents believed that the negative effects of office politics on the work environment had increased over the past

five years (Ashby and Pell, 2001).  Careers within the federal government, by nature, are significantly affected by office politics; this can be attributed to the highly bureaucratic environment, which only adds fuel to the fire.  The "red tape" that often surrounds hiring practices, promotion opportunities, and budget decisions in addition to the numerous rules and regulations that constrain civil servants often serve to heighten an employee's level of discontentment.  Politics and bureaucracy can never be fully removed from any organization; however, one-way to combat this phenomenon is for leadership to clearly communicate to the workforce the reasons for decisions made within these constraints. Additionally, the active involvement of the workforce in the decision making process will ensure greater understanding and wider acceptance of the decisions made by managers.

High performing employees are of strategic importance to any organization.  These individuals readily accept challenges and bring about innovative solutions to complex problems.  Yet, managers must be wary so as not to overload these workers.  Too often key employees are turned to on a continual basis to make crucial contract awards or to meet pending deadlines.  If employees begin to perceive that the workload is not being distributed in a fair and equitable manner or that their contributions are significantly greater than those of their peers, then feelings that they are being used or exploited will begin to grow (Ashby and Pell, 2001).  If left unaddressed, this perception will be the driving force behind the departure of these individuals; since, key employees will not remain in an environment that does not take steps to treat its workforce in a reasonable manner.  Providing down-time for high performing employees between high stress assignments and recognizing their superior contributions will prevent the burnout that facilitates their departure from the organization.

Workers may choose to leave an organization because a trusted friend has made the decision to accept employment elsewhere.  Often this brings about feelings of discontentment in the employee who stays in the organization; moreover, the depression that sets in has been compared to that which takes place when a close friend moves to a new town or a child goes away to college.  Similar feelings emerge among the remaining employees when a close colleague retires (Ashby and Pell, 2001).  This effect is compounded as more people leave a particular organization.  Employees begin to believe

that the grass must be greener elsewhere, since so many people have chosen to seek employment in another organization. Through team building activities, savvy leaders promote a climate that fosters close relationships across the entire organization. This ensures that there are strong support systems in place to help those who remain to understand why individuals chose to leave.

These dynamics have a profound effect on an organization's ability to retain key employees. Large companies, those with 500 or more employees, are most attuned to the problem. Human Resource professionals within these firms have recognized additional reasons why workers leave an organization: a better compensation package offer, a greater opportunity for advancement somewhere else, and a different career opportunity in another field. Two additional reasons are lower on their list but are still of significant importance: burnout caused by prolonged exposure to stress and a concern in regards to the future of the organization (2001).

### *c.     Acknowledgment of Turnover*

Organization leaders must acknowledge that the loss of well-trained and highly skilled workers represents a serious drain not only on their resources but also on their ability to operate efficiently and effectively. The first step is to measure the cost to the organization through the use of an electronic turnover calculator. The results will provide the ammunition required to convince management to take the next step: development of specific strategies to improve retention and better reward high performers. The Department of Defense has seen the potential of this strategy and embarked on a mission to revise the federal pay system through the implementation of the National Security Personnel System. The table below depicts strategies to promote the retention of the organization's most critical asset as well as the percentage of organizations that utilize this strategy.

| Strategy | Percent of Organizations Utilizing Strategy |
|---|---|
| Competitive Salary Adjustments | 59 |
| Promotion Opportunities | 57 |
| Career Training and Development Prospects | 50 |
| Bonuses | 41 |
| Flexible Work Schedules | 28 |
| Benefit Packages | 14 |
| Attractive Retirement Plans | 2 |

**Table 3.     Employee Retention Strategies and Percentage of Occasions Utilized (From Ashby and Pell, 2001)**

## F.     SUMMARY

Climate has a definitive influence on job satisfaction and individual job performance (Clark, 2002). Additionally, empirical research suggests linkages between organizational climate and productivity. Therefore, it can be stated that the climate of the work environment is directly related to the organization's ability to motivate employees to high levels of performance. The Army Acquisition Center is a customer-focused organization; this being the case, it is important to note that the ability to obtain high levels of productivity will result in a workforce that delivers high quality customer service at reduced costs, which raises overall customer value (2002).

The key to creating a healthy organizational climate is to identify and remove negative environmental factors from the workplace. Once isolated, behaviors such as ineffectual communication networks, a lack of reward and recognition programs, and low team commitment can be lessened and constructive behaviors encouraged. By nurturing particular values, morals, attitudes, and styles of work, leaders have the ability to positively affect employee perceptions of the organization's climate.

Through the use of assessment tools, such as workforce surveys and employee interviews, it is possible to determine the current organizational climate of the organization in relation to a series study dimensions. Specifically, by examining

employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress it is possible to provide a baseline evaluation of the climate of the workplace.

With the commitment of management, the climate of the organization can be improved and maintained for the long-term; moreover, every organization should include a climate assessment as part of its strategic vision. Regularly conducted climate assessments will ensure that areas in need of improvement are brought to light before they become detrimental to the productivity of the organization. This proactive approach will allow management to mitigate issues before they require costly, reactive attention.

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# III.   METHODOLOGY

## A.   RESEARCH APPROACH

This project incorporated the results of 30 one-on-one interviews conducted with both past and present members of an Army Acquisition Center to identify organizational climate characteristics to provide leaders and supervisors with data on the extent to which employees perceive their work environment to be conducive to high productivity.  This data was supplemented by responses collected through the utilization of a researcher-developed survey.  This survey was conducted on-line using Business Objects software to tabulate the data.  Though the creation of various reports, conclusions were drawn based on responses provided to questions relating to various survey dimensions.  To encompass as large a segment of the population as possible, no discriminators, such as years of service, grade/rank, gender, etc, were used.  These evaluation methods were designed to uncover the forces that shape an individual's behavior on the job and to provide insight into methods the center can use to improve its productivity.  The findings of this project will be presented to the leadership in an effort to provide a baseline calculation of the organizational climate, which can be supplemented by future studies.

## B.   DATA COLLECTION

### 1.   Subjects

The participants in this study were all past or present members of the Army Acquisition Center.  Input was solicited from individuals at all levels, i.e. Leadership (GS-15 and above), Supervision (GS-14), Contracting Officers (GS-13), Contract Specialists (GS-11-12), and Contract Specialist – Interns (GS-7 to 9); as well as, from individuals who now work at other jobs within the command and in private industry.  To establish an up-to-date and accurate representation of the organizational climate within the Acquisition Center, only former employees who left within fiscal year 2005 were included in the research.  No discriminators, such as years of contracting experience, grade/rank, education level, gender, etc, were incorporated in the study; therefore, participation was not limited and the entire population of the center was afforded the

opportunity to respond.  All results of this study were based on the responses of those participants who chose to complete the survey and the individuals with whom we conducted one-on-one interviews.

## 2.    Instruments

This study utilized a survey and one-on-one interviews to address the following dimensions of organizational climate: employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress.  Since data was collected on both the Acquisition Center's leaders and its supervisors, separate definitions were developed.    The assessment defined "leader" as the GS − 15 level Sector Chief and above.  Supervisor was defined on an individual basis in relation to the level of the individual taking the assessment; therefore, respondents were asked to describe the way the person to whom they directly reported dealt with them at work.  Contract Specialists report to Contracting Officers, Contracting Officers report to Group Chiefs, and Group Chiefs report to Sector Chiefs.  Prior to being asked to participate in both the survey and the interviews subjects were informed that their involvement was strictly voluntary and that their identity would remain anonymous.

### *a.    Employee Surveys*

To carry out this study, approximately 330 employees of the Army Acquisition Center were asked via an e-mail message to complete an on-line organizational climate survey.   The format consisted of questions in each study dimension in accordance with the following schedule: employee involvement (six questions), work relationships (eight questions), recognition of employee contributions (eight questions), individual's commitment to the organization (nine questions), supervision (nine questions), leadership (eight questions), job satisfaction (eight questions), organization's commitment to the individual (ten questions), worker characteristics (ten questions), and job stress (ten questions).  This equated to a total of 86 questions related to the specific study dimensions.  A five point Likert scale was utilized

to record respondent answers. The scale consisted of the following responses: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. (Note: The option to "Skip Question" was also available.) Lastly, demographic questions queried respondents in the following areas: length of employment, job series, amount of time in current position, sector within the organization, years worked in the Acquisition Center, number of teams one worked on while in the Acquisition Center, whether care is provided for loved ones, and the distance they travel to work. The entire survey required approximately 20 minutes to complete. The complete survey is located in Appendix A.

### b. *Semi-structured Interviews*

A total of 30 interviews were conducted with current and former Acquisition Center employees. The format of the interview was structured consistent to that of the survey, i.e. participants were asked questions in each of the ten study dimensions (employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress). The interview was designed to allow participants to provide verbal feedback on each of the study dimensions. Each interview took approximately 30 - 45 minutes to complete. A complete listing of the interview questions is located in Appendix B.

### 3. Procedure

### a. *Survey Administration*

The survey was made available to all employees of the Acquisition Center. Individuals were asked in an e-mail message to complete an optional, web-based organizational climate survey. A web link that allowed users to enter the website was forwarded with the e-mail message. Upon entering the site, users were instructed to select the "Acq. Ctr. Survey" option on screen. Once selected, the participation consent form appeared on screen for respondents to read. A link at both the top and bottom of the page was provided that opened the survey. The survey objective was provided as an introduction at the beginning of the instrument. The questions were listed by study dimension; to the right of each question was a dropdown box containing a five point

Likert scale to record respondent answers.  In accordance with the survey consent form and instructions, an option to skip individual questions was provided.

The instrument was programmed using Business Objects software; this provided the researchers the ability to query a database in which the responses were stored in order to draw conclusions from the data.  Reports can be generated based on factors such as responses most often provided or related scores to the demographic information provided; in addition, negatively phrased items can be reverse-scored before averaging the items to create a summary score for each concept.

Response rates generally declined as respondents progressed through the survey from one dimension to the next.  One hundred six individuals responded to the Employee Involvement section.  The next two sections, Work Relationships and Recognition of Employee Contributions, contained responses from 104 employees each.  Ninety-nine respondents completed the questions in the Individual's Commitment to the Organization portion of the survey.  The Supervision section contained responses from 96 participants.  Ninety-three individuals provided responses to the Leadership and Job Satisfaction sections.  Ninety-one participants completed the Organization's Commitment to the Individual and Worker Characteristics sections.  Lastly, 87 respondents completed the Job Stress questions.

### b.  *Interview Administration*

Interviews were administered to 30 individuals; all participants were either currently employed in the Acquisition Center or had recently discontinued employment sometime within fiscal year 2005.  To ensure that all social clusters within the community were represented and that the interview findings remained unbiased, stratified random sampling was used to select individuals from various segments of the population.  Each interview was taped using a digital voice recorder.  A transcript was then composed and provided to each participant.  This allowed the respondent to insure that the researcher accurately captured their answers to the interview questions.  Signed consent forms were exercised prior to the publishing of any participant feedback.

## C.    DATA ANALYSIS

Survey responses were tracked via Business Objects.  Business Objects is a query, reporting, and analysis tool that sorts and tabulates static data.  This data is then used to create reports that detail specific correlations in the data pool.  In this assessment, a report was generated based on the total number of responses to a specific question in a given dimension; in addition, a percentage of total responses was provided.  The responses were scored 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 based on the Likert scale that corresponds to the following statements: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree.  Any answer of "Skip Question" was disregarded.  Negatively and positively phrased questions were used to approach related concepts from different angles, e.g. if "My boss includes me in decision making." rates a response of four, then "My boss excludes me from decision making" should have received a score of two.

Response rates varied depending on the specific dimension respondents were addressing.  This may be due to the length of the survey.  The first dimension, Employee Involvement, received the highest response rate, 106 individuals; however, as respondents progressed through the instrument, the response rate steadily decreased to a low of 87 employee responses in the final dimension, Stress.  Overall, response rates averaged less than one third of the total population of the Acquisition Center. Speculation on the cause of this would suggest a lack of time in the workday to accomplish work related duties and complete the survey or employee apathy.

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# IV.   RESULTS

## A.   EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

Employee involvement is the level of trust leaders bestow on employees to make decisions and get the job done.  If an organization values employee involvement, it must ensure that employees know their role and grant them the authority to carry out that role.  Employee involvement emphasizes the participation of the employee in organizational goal setting, work design, and decision-making.  Encouraging employee involvement is a key element in the development of a positive and participative organizational climate.

### 1.   Analysis of Survey Responses

The survey revealed that 70% or more of the respondents felt that their jobs had variety.  It also determined that they knew what was expected of them in those jobs and against what performance standards they would be rated.  Overall 53% believed that their role in the organization was clearly defined; in addition, 49% felt that they possessed the authority to act and make decisions about their work assignments.

A key component of employee involvement is ensuring that workers are encouraged to participate in the decisions that affect them.  In this regard, 44% of respondents felt that they were not given sufficient opportunity to make those decisions.



| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 37 |
| Disagree | 47 |
| Neutral | 22 |
| Sum: | 106.00 |
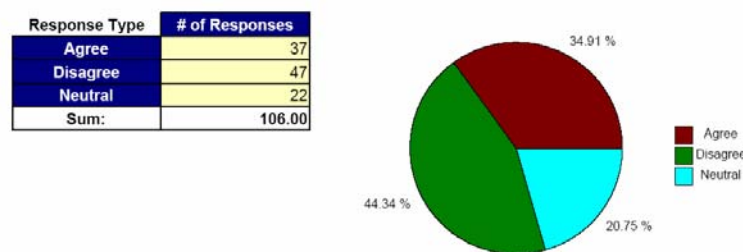
**Figure 6.  Employee Involvement: I am Encouraged to Participate in Decisions that Affect Me.**

### 2.   Analysis of Interview Responses

Interview results showed that 78% of the subjects felt they are being challenged in their current position, in the type of work they are given, and in the responsibilities that

are placed on them. When asked if they were provided the opportunity to make decisions that directly affected the work that they do, 72% agreed, another 78% further concurred that they also felt they were given the freedom to make decisions relating to the performance of their duties.

Empowering employees with the opportunity and authority to perform is evidence that an organization values employee involvement. However, in order to perform effectively, employees must truly understand their role within the organization. When participants were asked if what was expected of them had been made clear, 67% agreed. However, only 50% of interviewees felt that their specific role on their team or in their group had been made clear beyond routine performance standards. As a follow-up comment to that question, one respondent said, "No my role was not made clear beyond my performance standards, and the performance standards do not accurately represent what I do on a day to day basis." Another comment was, "I had to figure it out. Nothing is really explained. I figured out what was expected of me as a new Contracting Officer more from my customers' expectations of me than from the Acquisition Center itself." Half of the respondents considered themselves to be business managers making important, professional decisions that affect the contract, program, and customer. Finally, 83% agreed that they are held accountable for the consequences of the decisions that they were empowered to make.

## B.   WORK RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships that are formed between coworkers often have a profound effect on an organization's climate. These relationships can promote an atmosphere conducive to open collaboration between employees; conversely, they may result in an environment in which knowledge is hoarded to promote self-importance. An important goal within the organization should be to create a friendly work environment that facilitates the open exchange of ideas, which, in turn, increases the positive nature of the organization's climate and improves productivity.

1.    **Analysis of Survey Responses**

While only 34% of respondents agreed that their coworkers were their trusted friends, 69% said that they valued the friendship of fellow employees; moreover, 89% responded that they enjoyed friendly conversations with coworkers and 78% said that their coworkers respected them. Lastly, 69% responded that they have time for personal interaction during the workday.

Less than 10% of respondents agreed that obtaining work related advice from fellow employees is difficult; furthermore, 83% feel comfortable asking coworkers for job-related information and 88% said that coworkers are willing to discuss work related problems with them.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---------------|----------------|
| Agree | 10 |
| Disagree | 78 |
| Neutral | 16 |
| Sum: | 104.00 |
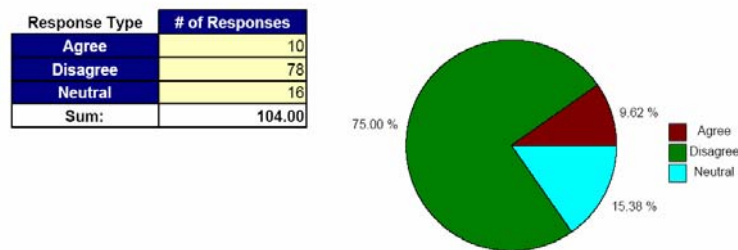


**Figure 7.  Work Relationships: It is Difficult to Obtain Work-related Advice from My Coworkers.**

2.    **Analysis of Interview Responses**

When asked to characterize their relationships with coworkers, 89% of respondents felt comfortable in business situations and at least somewhat comfortable in social situations; 89% also said that they acted in accordance with their basic personalities when relating to their coworkers. Only 11% felt that they must be all business, all the time, because something restricted them from being themselves. Every subject interviewed agreed that they were comfortable discussing work issues with coworkers; only 11% felt that they could not discuss personal issues with their fellow employees. One respondent said, "Yes, I am comfortable discussing work topics with coworkers, but it is much easier to talk horizontally with people at my level. Asking my superiors is difficult because I am left with the feeling that it ends up being a bad reflection on me."

## C.   RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS

Organizational climate can be positively or negatively affected by how well programs designed to recognize and reward employees are managed.  If done well, these programs motivate workers to ever increasing levels of performance; but, if poorly applied, leaders lose a valuable opportunity.  Recognition comes in many shapes and sizes; but to be truly effective, it must be consistent with the organization's values.  In addition to recognition, workers must perceive the evaluation processes that result in specific recognition as fair.  Lastly, it is essential that if employees exceed their minimum daily performance requirements, they be suitably recognized.

### 1.   Analysis of Survey Responses

Promotions provide a powerful incentive for workers to put forth extra effort within their jobs.  They are an excellent way to reward and challenge deserving employees; however, only 13% of respondents agreed that the right people within the Acquisition Center were promoted.  Also, nearly half of the respondents disagreed that the proper people received promotions.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 14 |
| Disagree | 52 |
| Neutral | 38 |
| Sum: | 104.00 |
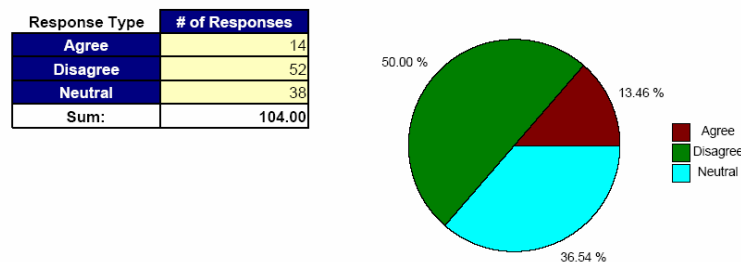


**Figure 8.  Recognition of Employee Contributions: The Right People in the Organization are Getting Promoted**

When asked if the workload on the team was distributed fairly, 37% agreed and nearly the same amount, 40%, disagreed.  Regarding feedback, respondents received the right balance of feedback 39% of the time; however, only 27% felt that when they received negative feedback, they were told clearly and specifically what they did wrong.

As stated, recognition of employee efforts is a very an important tool.  Forty-five percent of respondents did not feel that they received praise when they did an outstanding

job; 42% felt that when they did something beyond the call of duty, they were not thanked; and 40% did not feel appreciated when they worked extra hard to get the job done. Given these percentages, it is interesting to note that when asked if the type of recognition that they received is in proportion to the effort that they put forth and the quality of their work, 37% of the respondents agreed.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---------------|----------------|
| Agree | 38 |
| Disagree | 48 |
| Neutral | 18 |
| Sum: | 104.00 |
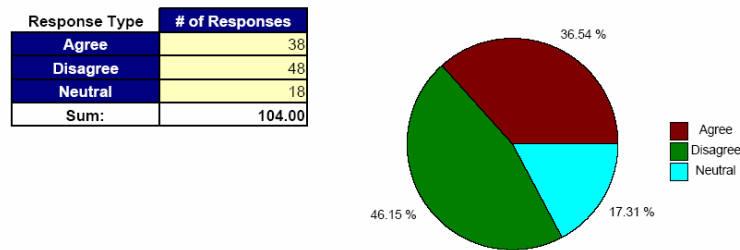
**Figure 9. Recognition of Employee Contributions: The Type of Recognition I Receive is in Proportion to the Effort I Put Forth and the Quality of My Work**

### 2. Analysis of Interview Responses

In regard to the quantity of work that the interviewees were responsible for managing, 72% agreed that they had a difficult time keeping up. One of the respondents who said he was keeping up added, "It's mostly 'doable.' I mean I'm doing it aren't I?" Although comments were made to the effect that some of the workload issues had to do with the nature of the work and some with the fact that the Acquisition Center just needs more people, only 28% interviewees felt that the workload was distributed fairly across groups and teams. Respondents added sentiments along the lines of: "The farmer beats the horse that works." and "Keeping up is damn near impossible. I'm drowning, but I work hard and I care, so they keep piling more and more on; the slackers aren't given much of anything." Another respondent, almost admittedly said, "Those who work hard get more work, that's just the way it is, and it's how the work gets done." Eight three percent said that they would find a different method to distribute work more evenly across contract specialists or teams.

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An important form of employee recognition is the feedback employees receive from their superiors. Seventy-eight percent of respondents said that they received some type of feedback from their Team Leader, but 22% of the 78% clarified that they only received minimal feedback. Eighty-three percent of respondents identified receiving feedback from their Group Chief, and 52% went on to say that feedback was only given when performance appraisals were due. Lastly, 56% responded that they had not received any feedback from their Sector Chief. Of the feedback that was received, 83% of interviewees said that they received both positive and negative feedback.

Respondents' perception of recognition in the Acquisition Center revealed that 83% did not believe that the right people in the organization were recognized for their accomplishments. Ninety-four percent of all the respondents believed that there were people who should be recognized but were overlooked. When asked if the right people in the organization were being promoted, 28% said yes, and another 28% said that at least some of the people being promoted were the right people. Respondents were also asked, given the current environment (the departure of the baby boomers), if individuals were being promoted too quickly or too slowly in the organization. One hundred percent of respondents agreed that many of the individuals who were promoted needed more experience and that they were indeed being promoted too quickly. However, 22% conceded that due to the demographic changes in the Acquisition Center, the organization has no choice. One respondent added, "Those with potential are pushed hard to move up, and take on more very quickly because we need people so badly." Another said, "People are promoted too quickly, but they have no choice, it's about the survival of the organization."

Interviewees were asked specifically if experienced people were being promoted. Sixty-one percent responded negatively and 39% said that some experienced people were being promoted. When further pressed, 100% said that they were supportive of those they believed to be less experienced or less qualified than those promoted ten years ago.

## D. INDIVIDUAL'S COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANIZATION

Employee commitment and organizational climate are closely related. If employees are not committed to the organization in which they work, the poor attitude

they possess will permeate the workplace. Conversely, strong commitment by workers tends to positively affect organizational climate. Leaders can hedge the bets in their favor by clearly stating the basic mission and vision of the organization and by involving workers in the goal setting processes. This demonstrates to employees that their actions contribute to the overall success or failure of the organization.

### 1.     Analysis of Survey Responses

Leaders have successfully communicated to employees the mission and vision of the center. Seventy percent of respondents stated that they clearly understood the mission and vision of the organization, and 71% said that they understood the role that they must play to assist the Acquisition Center in meeting the mission and vision. Most importantly, 87% were committed to doing their part in helping the center meet its mission and vision.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---------------|---------------:|
| Agree | 86 |
| Disagree | 3 |
| Neutral | 10 |
| Sum: | 99.00 |

86.87 %

10.10 %

3.03 %

Agree
Disagree
Neutral
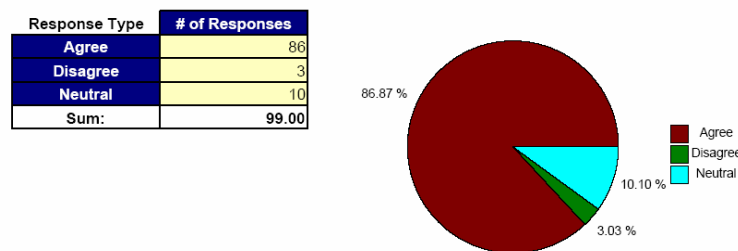
**Figure 10.        Individual's Commitment to the Organization: I am Committed to Doing My Part in Helping the Acq Ctr Meet Its Mission and Vision**

When specifically asked if they were strongly committed to the organization, 46% agreed. The same question was asked from a negative angle (Participants were asked if they felt little loyalty to the center.), 49% disagreed. The relative closeness of the two percentages acknowledges the validity of the responses. Forty-six percent of respondents replied that they rarely sought out information about other job opportunities prior to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) announcement.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 46 |
| Disagree | 37 |
| Neutral | 16 |
| Sum: | 99.00 |

46.46 %

Agree
Disagree
Neutral

16.16 %

37.37 %
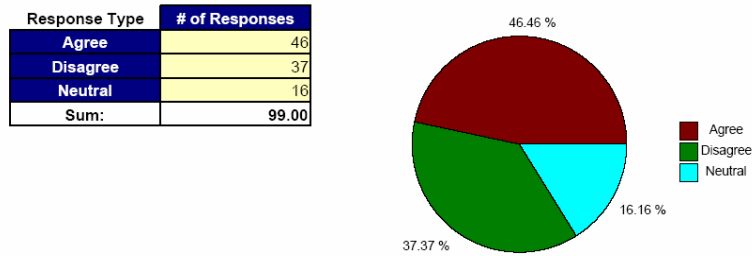
**Figure 11.      Individual's Commitment to the Organization: I Rarely Sought Out Information About Other Job Opportunities Prior to BRAC**

In addition to being strongly committed to the organization, 52% of workers were proud to tell others that they were employees of the Acquisition Center, and 67% cared about the fate of the organization. Lastly, 46% would recommend the contracting career field to others.

### 2.      Analysis of Interview Responses

Interviewees were asked if they were committed to the success of the Acquisition Center; 56% responded positively. Seventy-eight percent felt that their commitment was more focused on supporting their customer and the warfighter than specifically the success of the Acquisition Center. One respondent added, "I don't really think about the Acquisition Center. I was told to be customer-focused, so making my customer's mission happen contractually is my personal mission and focus."

The majority of respondents, 61%, agreed that they were proud to be Department of the Army Civilians working in the Acquisition Center. However, 44% felt it was necessary to clarify, that in general, they were more proud of the work that they do than of being part of the center itself. Interviewee comments on the subject were strong. One respondent said, "I am proud to be a DA Civilian; but, I have no particular interest in the well-being of the Acquisition Center, mainly because I don't feel that the Acquisition Center is concerned about me." Another said, "Yes, I am proud. But I am proud of my work, not of the organization itself. Many customers have a bad impression of the Acquisition Center. I have made it a point of showing my customers that not all contracting people are hard to work with. It's a constant challenge. I am mostly proud of the work I am able to accomplish for my customer in spite of the Acquisition Center."

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When asked what level of commitment respondents felt specifically to the Acquisition Center on a scale of 0-10 (0 being no commitment, 10 being a great deal of commitment), the average was a 5.6. Thirty-three percent responded with a number above 6, and 28% responded with a 4 or lower. One comment added was, "To my coworkers, I feel I am committed at level 10, but to management I would only give them a 3. It seems they are so distant from the floor and what we do every day." Another respondent added, "When I started this job, I would say my commitment was a 10, but it diminished in a short period of 2 years to a 5. It just seems like things are accomplished in spite of the Acquisition Center, not because of it." In spite of some of the lack of commitment that employees displayed during interviews, only 33% said that, prior to the BRAC announcement, they were actually seeking employment elsewhere.

Finally, interviewees were also asked if anything could be done to increase their level of commitment. Eighty-three responded positively with the strong belief that adjustments could be made that would raise the level of commitment of Acquisition Center employees. Of the 17% that responded negatively, the comments supporting their answers varied a great deal. One comment was, "No, I am already highly committed." Another said, "Nothing can be done to increase commitment. It comes from within a person. You set the course for your own day and your own career." Lastly, a respondent said, "Nothing can be done, I have no faith or respect for the current leadership anymore."

## E.    SUPERVISION

Supervisors must realize that their primary source of productivity is their workforce; therefore, to genuinely be effective, they must treat their employees as mature adults, with dignity and respect. The way in which employees are treated and how they perceive, and subsequently react to, the organization's climate determines whether or not they will be motivated to reach their greatest potential. In addition, the key to being people oriented is trust; the most effective supervisors are considered trustworthy. In order to instill a sense of trust, supervisors must allow employees to participate in goal

setting and be a part of the organization's decision-making process. Creating a climate that allows employees to function at high levels is far more beneficial than merely reigning over them.

### 1.    Analysis of Survey Responses

A large percentage of respondents, 88%, stated that their supervisor talked to them and knew their name, 74% said that supervision treated them with courtesy and respect, 53% stated that their questions were answered truthfully, and 61% responded that appreciation was shown for their efforts and contributions. Lastly, 46%, almost half, replied that they were encouraged to express their ideas freely.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 44 |
| Disagree | 31 |
| Neutral | 21 |
| Sum: | 96.00 |
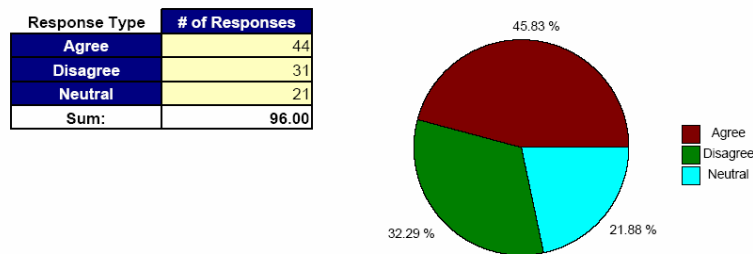
**Figure 12.        Supervision: Supervision Encourages Me to Express My Ideas Freely**

While 42% stated that guidance provided from supervision remained consistent from the Team Leader level through the Director level, only 33% believed that information was shared freely. Also, 38% replied that explanations were given when decisions were made that affected them; on the contrary, 49% stated that they were not consulted when decisions were made whose results affected them.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 26 |
| Disagree | 47 |
| Neutral | 23 |
| Sum: | 96.00 |
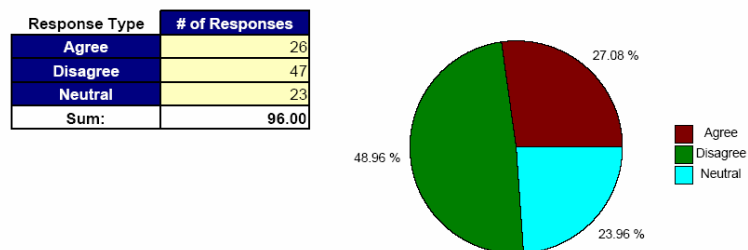
**Figure 13.        Supervision: Supervisors Consult Me when Making Decisions that Affect Me**

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### 2. Analysis of Interview Responses

Respondents were asked if they think of their supervisor as a mentor or just a boss. Twenty-two percent thought of their supervisor as a mentor, 72% considered their supervisor a "boss" only, and 6% said some of both. One comment was, "My supervisor is my boss. The focus is simply on pushing us to meet PALT." However, 67% felt that their supervisor recognized their contributions. The most common forms of recognition from supervision were said to come verbally, in the form of e-mail messages, or via a certificate. Seventeen percent said that they only received recognition from their supervisor when they met to review their performance appraisal, and 22% said that most of the recognition that they received came from outside the organization, from their customer. Additionally, interviewees were asked if supervision explained the decisions made or if those decisions were used as learning tools for employee development. Fifty-six percent agreed, 28% said that decisions were explained occasionally, but that they did not consider those occurrences as learning tools for their development. Lastly, 56% of respondents agreed that their supervisor solicited their opinions and ideas.

## F. LEADERSHIP

Research indicates, "50 to 70 percent of an organization's climate can be traced to its leadership or management style. In other words, good managers create good climates, while poor managers create poor climates" (Watkin, 2001). Creating an organizational climate that values the people who make up the organization is in great part dependent upon the system of communication that exists between leadership and the workforce. Leadership's ability to effectively communicate ideas is just as important as an employee's response to that communication, since effective organizational communication is vital to productivity and employee commitment.

### 1. Analysis of Survey Responses

A large percentage of respondents, 45%, believed that their leaders had good intentions; however, 43% did not trust the organization's leaders, 40% were suspicious of their leaders' motives, and only 31% trusted what their leaders told them.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 42 |
| Disagree | 23 |
| Neutral | 28 |
| Sum: | 93.00 |

45.16 %

Agree
Disagree
Neutral

24.73 %

30.11 %
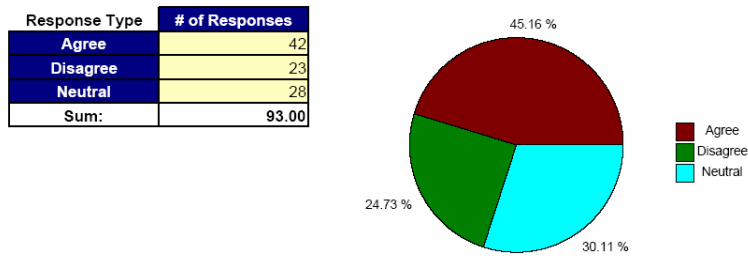
**Figure 14.        Leadership: I Believe that Our Leaders Have Good Intentions**

Communication between leadership and the workforce did not fare much better. While 45% of participants responded that Sector leaders kept them informed of what was going on in the Sector, 58% said that leaders did not take the time to communicate the reasoning behind critical decisions that the leader made, 52% said that communication from leaders was neither clear nor open, and only 28% said that communication from leaders was timely.

### 2.        Analysis of Interview Responses

More than half of the interview respondents, 56%, did not feel that communication from leaders was presented on a timely basis and in a clear manner. Only 44% felt that the reasons for the decisions of leadership were made clear. Seventy-two percent of interviewees said that they did not trust that leaders had the needs of the workforce in mind when they made decisions. One comment was, "No, we are not consulted. The only concern is getting the job done and the end of year statistics. They'll only be concerned when we aren't or can't get the work done, and by then it will be too late." Overall, the lack of trust in leadership was further supported by only 17% of respondents who said that they trust what leadership tells them. A respondent added, "I trust that they believe what they tell me; I get what I need."

When asked if Acquisition Center leadership was approachable, 44% said yes and an additional 11% said somewhat. However, 56% of respondents said that they were not comfortable communicating with leadership. One respondent that was comfortable communicating with leadership said, "Yes, I am comfortable. …they listen politely."

## G. JOB SATISFACTION

Job Satisfaction incorporates the feelings and attitudes employees' hold in regard to their occupation. These feelings and attitudes relate directly to employee perceptions of their job and, therefore, have a pronounced effect on organizational climate. Job satisfaction can be broken down into two aspects: the work itself or the outcomes directly related to the work (Greenberg, 2002). There are several components that make-up an employee's level of job satisfaction, including, current job activities, co-worker relationships, interaction with management, workload, opportunities for advancement, and the challenges of their current position.

### 1. Analysis of Survey Responses

Overall, employees were content with their positions; indeed, 49% stated that all things considered, they were satisfied with their jobs. Furthermore, 53% were satisfied with the challenges of their current positions, 52% were satisfied with the work activities that made up their job, and 56% said that they could cope with their current workload as long as they wanted. On the downside, 39% were dissatisfied with their opportunities for career advancement.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 46 |
| Disagree | 21 |
| Neutral | 26 |
| Sum: | 93.00 |
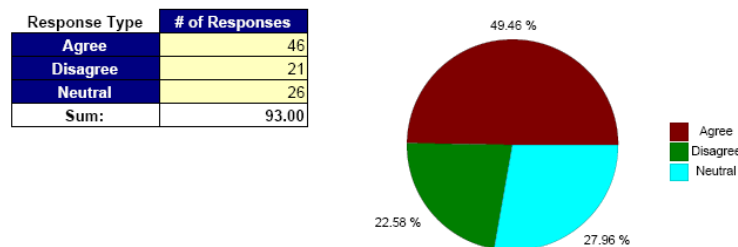


**Figure 15.    Job Satisfaction: All Things Considered, I am Satisfied with My Job**

As far as being satisfied with the people with whom they work, 78% of respondents were satisfied with their coworkers and 71% were satisfied with their supervisor. On the other hand, only 25% were satisfied with top leadership.

### 2. Analysis of Interview Responses

Overall, 55% of respondents said they enjoyed, or at least somewhat enjoyed, working in the field of acquisition.  Even a greater percentage, 67% of respondents, said they liked the job they currently performed for the Acquisition Center.  Another 17% said they were mostly happy with their current job.  Additionally, 72% confirmed that they were satisfied with their current position/grade level in the organization.

## H. ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENT TO THE INDIVIDUAL

The organization's commitment to the individual relates to the level to which individuals perceive the organization's dedication to their growth and happiness.  This dimension is also defined as the degree of support that workers feel they receive from the organization and its representatives.  Employee development is a very specific indicator of the organization's commitment to the individual.  When an organization displays a willingness to invest in an employee through training and education, it is indicating the present and future value of that employee to the organization.  On every level, the measurement of organizational commitment is essential since the more committed an individual perceives the organization is to his or her well-being, the more loyalty that individual will show to the organization.

### 1. Analysis of Survey Responses

Training is a key motivator in the workplace.  Sixty-seven percent of participants stated that they were given a real opportunity to improve their skills at the Acquisition Center through education and training.  Moreover, 34% disagreed that they were required to complete too many training hours.  The downside to these statistics is that 45% of respondents replied that the amount of training that they were required to complete did not improve their job performance.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 61 |
| Disagree | 15 |
| Neutral | 15 |
| Sum: | 91.00 |

67.03 %

Agree
Disagree
Neutral

16.48 %

16.48 %
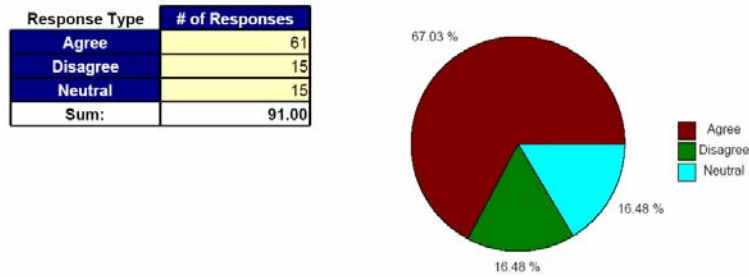
**Figure 16.** **Organization's Commitment to the Individual: I am Given a Real Opportunity to Improve My Skills at the Acquisition Center Through Education and Training Programs**

Forty-seven percent of the employees who completed the survey felt that they were an important part of the team, and 43% felt that others were open to their suggestions. When asked if they have difficulty finding information they needed to do their job, 62% stated that they did not.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 20 |
| Disagree | 56 |
| Neutral | 15 |
| Sum: | 91.00 |

21.98 %

Agree
Disagree
Neutral

61.54 %

16.48 %
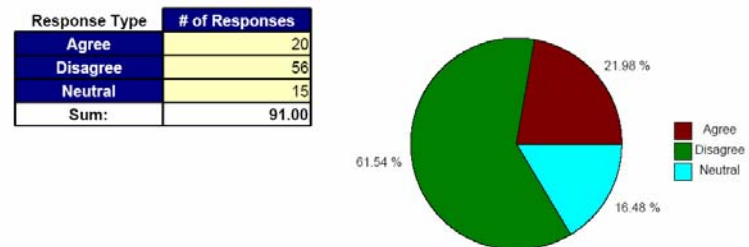
**Figure 17.** **Organization's Commitment to the Individual: I Have a Hard Time Finding Information that I Need to Do My Job**

The organization did not fare as well when participants were asked if the Acquisition Center cared about their well-being, 40% disagreed. In addition, 33% disagreed that the center valued their contribution to its well-being, and 22% stated that they were not treated like a valued contributor. However, it is interesting that for each of these questions, 38%, 31%, and 45% of respondents, respectively, chose to either skip the question or pick the "Neutral" response. Finally, an overwhelming 57% did not believe that the center strongly considered their goals and values.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 14 |
| Disagree | 52 |
| Neutral | 25 |
| Sum: | 91.00 |

57.14 %   15.38 %   27.47 %

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
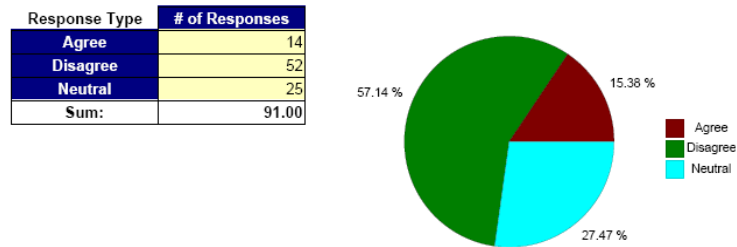
**Figure 18.** **Organization's Commitment to the Individual: The Acquisition Center Strongly Considers My Goals and Values**

### 2. Analysis of Interview Responses

When respondents were asked if they believed that the Acquisition Center was focused on making them effective as contracting professionals, 67% agreed. Particularly, 89% felt that they were provided the training they need to excel. However, 50% of the interviewees did not believe that the amount of training they were given enabled them to become better at their job. In fact, 72% felt, at least at times, that the amount of required training actually prevented them from being effective at their job. Seventy-eight percent said it was possible to get too much training. Most respondents who felt that too much training was a possible problem added comments such as, "What is really important is on-the-job training." "Training is fine, but we need time to implement what we were taught." "Too much classroom training and not enough on-the-job experience is detrimental." "Often, it seems that training takes time away from getting real-life experience."

Respondents were also asked if they felt that the Acquisition Center, as an organization, cared about them as individuals. Eighty-three percent responded negatively. However, 67% did say that they are made to feel, at least somewhat, like an integral part of the contracting team.

### I. WORKER CHARACTERISTICS

Individual worker characteristics play a dynamic role in the climate of the organization, so much so that, researchers often debate whether the characteristics of the worker must change to meet the needs of the organization, or the characteristics of the

organization must change to meet the needs of the worker (Schneider, 1987a). One of the most important worker characteristics in relation to organizational climate is locus of control. Individuals with an internal locus of control feel that they have control over their life and the success that they achieve; whereas, individuals with an external locus of control commonly experience a feeling of powerlessness and being out of control.

### 1.    Analysis of Survey Responses

Eighty-four percent of the acquisition professionals who responded to the survey agreed that they paid attention to details; 73% were always prepared; and 82% responded that they completed assignments on time. To the statement, "I like to be the center of attention," 78% of the participants disagreed, but only 34% stated that they keep in the background.

When dealing with coworkers, 84% of respondents agreed that they sympathize with others' feelings, and 85% were comfortable dealing with people. This is an important factor in a customer-service oriented profession.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
|---|---|
| Agree | 77 |
| Disagree | 4 |
| Neutral | 10 |
| Sum: | 91.00 |

84.62 %

10.99 %

4.40 %

Agree
Disagree
Neutral
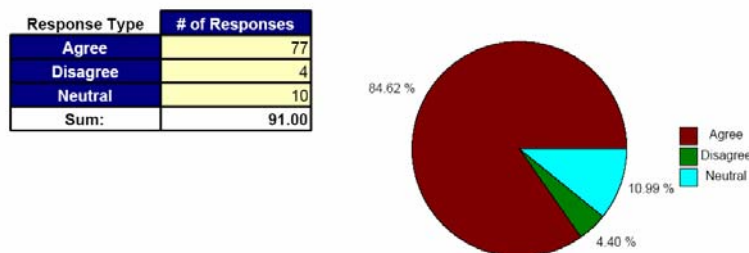
**Figure 19.          Worker Characteristics: I am Comfortable Dealing with People**

An almost equal percentage of respondents, 41% agreed and 38% disagreed, claimed that they felt in control of situations at work. They were split (43% agreed and 34% disagreed) on whether or not their personal decisions and efforts determined their success in the organization; however, 68% stated they were capable of handling uncomfortable situations at work.

### 2.      Analysis of Interview Responses

Interview results revealed that 50% of respondents considered themselves extraverts.  Seventy-eight percent said they were detail oriented, 56% tended to focus on following processes and preset procedures and preferred to do things in a specific order, and 89% of interviewees stayed organized by making lists of things to do.  The majority, 78%, identified themselves as most comfortable when given ample time to be prepared, while only 23% of respondents said they were even somewhat comfortable "flying by the seat of their pants."

In order to gain a sense of employee locus of control, interviewees were asked if they believed in fate and if they felt in control of their work situations.  Forty-four percent said they were not believers in fate; 61% said they did not feel in control of their work situations.  Specifically, 50% of respondents said they did not feel that working hard necessarily had a positive relationship to their success in the Acquisition Center.

Almost every respondent, 94%, said they saw both positive and negative feedback as a way to improve and not as criticism of their character.  One hundred percent of respondents also said that how well they responded to negative feedback depends on how it is delivered.  Several people added that the person making the delivery also influenced their response to negative feedback.  One comment was, "I see it as a way to improve, but it definitely has to do with the presentation.  Feedback also needs to be timely, appropriate, and consistent.  The messenger and the method matter."  Another respondent added, "It has to do with the presentation and the proper setting.  Praise in public; criticize in private.  That is not always the case here."

## J.      JOB STRESS

Individuals commonly experience stress as a feeling of powerlessness and being out of control; in fact, one's perceived control over a situation is an advantage in managing environmental stress agents (Bateman, 1996).  Researchers have found that stress becomes a problem when psychological anguish is high and morale is low.  Although particular employee characteristics, such as locus of control, may be a key determinant of the distress suffered in a particular situation, a positive organizational climate can play a critical role in buffering employees from pressures at work (1996).

## 1. Analysis of Survey Responses

Stress in one's life can cause a myriad of problems. Fifty-one percent of respondents stated that their current workload created stress, 57% said that meeting the required Procurement Acquisition Lead Time (PALT) produced stress, and 48% claimed that fulfilling training requirements was stressful. Also, 55% responded that difficulties using Electronic Tools caused stress and, 53% felt, in general, that daily contracting processes brought on stress. Sixty-four percent believed that moving to a new team produced stress, 37% disagreed that dealing with leaders and supervisors was stressful. Finally, only 28% stated that their experience level in the contracting field in relation to their current position created stress.

| Response Type | # of Responses |
| --- | --- |
| Agree | 24 |
| Disagree | 41 |
| Neutral | 22 |
| Sum: | 87.00 |

27.59 %
47.13 %
25.29 %

Agree
Disagree
Neutral
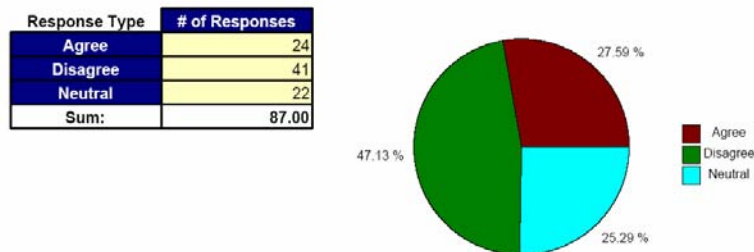
**Figure 20.** **Job Stress: My Experience Level in the Contracting Field in Relation to My Current Position Creates Stress**

On the whole, factors outside the work environment contribute to the overall level of stress in an individual's life; however, 62% of participants did not find their commute to and from work stressful and 32% did not feel that factors in their home life caused stress.

## 2. Analysis of Interview Responses

Among the greatest sources of stress that respondents experienced at work were the following: meeting deadlines (PALT and customer deadlines); working through government "red tape;" dealing with managers; workload; lack of experience both within the Acquisition Center and at the customers' end; lack of confidence in the information received; unclear direction; working with the Policy Group; and unrealistic expectations of management. In addition, 28% of respondents said that they did not have the

necessary organizational support system to help them accomplish their job on a daily basis. In regard to the organizational support system in the Acquisition Center, one Contracting Officer commented, "No, I don't have enough Contract Specialists. The interns need a lot of my time, and then when I need guidance, my supervisor is too busy. When I have asked for help, my supervisors have said repeatedly, 'You're the Contracting Officer.' That's not support." Another respondent said, "No, not really. You just have to figure it out and search out the answers." Finally, one interviewee said, "No, the support isn't really there through formal channels. Informally, I have formed relationships with some experienced people who I get support from."

Eighty-nine percent of respondents agreed that some of their personal characteristics contributed to the level of stress they felt at work. Several admitted that their attention to detail and their need to be prepared, organized and structured meant that they tended to get frustrated more easily. While others said, because they are laid back they are able to let a lot more go, so stress affected them less. Overall, when experiencing stress at work, most agreed that it affected one or more of the following: their patience level; temper; ability to focus; and their ability to communicate effectively. Fifty-six percent of respondents identified one or multiple physical symptoms that they contributed to the amount of job stress they experience. The physical symptoms mentioned include: headaches; back and neck pain; high blood pressure; lack of sleep; and anxiety attacks.

Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed that the level of stress they felt at work affected their degree of job satisfaction. One respondent said. "Yes, it effects my job satisfaction; it declines. I have become negative, and I care less about work than I once did." Another said, "Yes, it makes me loathe being here. It's frustrating not knowing what to do. I have trouble effectively guiding my customers and giving them value-added advice." When asked what some of the possible solutions were to relieve some of the stress that respondents experienced at work, only 11% felt that nothing can be done, and 89% believed that the stress in their lives could be effectively managed. Almost 30% identified the need for assistance in meeting the current workload and

stressed the need to get rid of those that were not productive.  Seventeen percent felt that only with more experience would their stress levels decrease.

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# V.    CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizational Climate can be described as the mood or relative "health" of the workplace or as an answer to the question, "What is it like to work in this organization?" This project examined the response to that question in an Army Acquisition Center and provided a baseline assessment of the work environment. The study principally examined the following dimensions: employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress.

It is important for leaders to build on the organization's positive aspects to continue the success of the Acquisition Center and to recognize, address, and remove the unhealthy aspects of an organization's climate thereby increasing worker commitment. This organizational climate assessment provided supervisors with data on the extent to which employees perceived their work environment as conducive to high productivity at the time the instrument was administered. The completed project is a diagnostic measurement of the health of the work environment in relation to the study dimensions.

## A.    CONCLUSION

### 1.    Strengths

**Acquisition Center employees are challenged in their current positions.** Fifty-three percent of survey respondents and 78% of those interviewed stated that they are satisfied with the challenges of their current positions. Leaders have successfully utilized the technique of job enrichment to ensure that the Acquisition Center has a wealth of well-rounded procurement professionals. A large component of job enrichment is adequate training; 67% of survey respondents agreed that they are given a real opportunity to improve their skills through education and training programs. This has allowed workers to perform at high levels with exceptional skill.

**Leaders have presented a clear mission and vision.** Seventy percent of survey respondents replied that they clearly understood the mission of the organization and 72%

understand the role that they must play to accomplish that mission and vision. On a macro level, leaders have clearly communicated to the workforce the mission and vision of the organization; moreover, leaders have done a good job of evaluating environmental changes and adjusting the mission and vision accordingly.

**Workers have high levels of commitment to that mission and vision.** Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents and 78% of interviewees stated that they are committed to doing their part to help the Acquisition Center meet its mission and vision. This displays a strong commitment by the workforce to the goals presented by organizational leaders and a sincere belief in the importance of the job that workers are performing. The result is the provision of valuable customer service and a sincere commitment to the needs of the warfighter.

**Employees have the ability to cope with their current workload as long as they want.** A concern of the researchers at the outset of this study was the apparent increase in the stress levels of Acquisition Center employees brought on by an increasing workload; however, survey results indicated that workers have a strong ability to adjust and adapt. While 51% of individuals stated that their workload causes stress, 56% of respondents stated that they have the ability to cope with their current workload as long as they want. Additionally, 53% are satisfied with the challenges of their current positions and nearly 50% are satisfied with their job overall.

**Employees are treated with courtesy and respect by supervisors.** Eighty-eight percent of respondents stated that their supervisor talks to them and knows them by name. Workers believe that their supervisors care for them and value the contribution that they make to the organization; indeed, 74% of those who responded declared that their supervisor treated them with courtesy and respect. A majority of employees (53%) also believe that supervisors answer their questions truthfully and 61% of supervisors show appreciation for the efforts and contributions of workers. The open exchange of ideas across the organization is a key aspect of success and a signal of a healthy climate; survey results revealed that 46% of individuals responded that their supervisor encourages them to express their ideas freely.

**Employees are comfortable discussing work topics and situations, as well as socializing with their co-workers.** Clearly the working relationships that have developed within the Acquisition Center are one of the organization's strengths. Eighty-three percent of workers stated that they are comfortable asking their coworkers for information required to perform their jobs. Employees are comfortable interacting with co-workers socially and 89% of respondents stated that they enjoyed friendly conversations with their coworkers. This has created an atmosphere conducive to knowledge sharing and employee growth within the Acquisition Center. In addition, this aspect of the organization's environment positively affected the overall level of job satisfaction of workers.

### 2. Areas for Improvement

**Workers hold the perception that the right people are not being promoted.** Fifty percent of survey respondents stated that the wrong people in the organization are being promoted. When interviewees were queried on this same point, they agreed and stated that, when possible, individuals with more experience should be promoted. Those interviewed equated years on the job with an increased ability to lead and make sound business decisions. This is another area where increased communication by leadership could alter the perception (or misperception) held by workers.

**The lines of communication are not open.** Fifty-six percent of interviewees were not comfortable either approaching or communicating with the organization's leaders; moreover, 52% of survey respondents said that communication from leaders was neither clear nor open. Fifty-eight percent of those responding to the survey stated that the reasoning behind critical decisions was not related to the individuals affected by those decisions. Lastly, 39% of employees stated that they were not made aware of important issues in a timely matter. Acquisition Center leadership must take the cue from supervisors and make themselves more approachable and their actions more understood by employees.

**Employees do not believe that the organization cares about their well-being.** Acquisition Center employees did not feel that the organization cared about them as individuals; in fact, 40% of survey respondents and 83% of interviewees did not believe

that the organization cared about their overall well-being.  While supervisors treated their employees with courtesy and respect, only 22% of interviewees considered their supervisor a mentor and not just a "boss;" in addition, 49% of those interviewed indicated they would like their supervisors to provide some form of reasoning for decisions made that affected them.  Employees have a desire to be treated as valuable contributors.  More effective communication between the workforce and supervisors would improve supervisor/employee relationships and increase the level of trust between the two groups.

**While workers are coping with the increased workload, stress is on the rise.** Workers stated that they could cope with their current workload; however, 51% responded that the workload they are currently managing creates stress.  The negative effects of stress are cumulative; if left unresolved, stress can bring about symptoms such as an inability to concentrate, obesity, and heart disease.  It is evident that some form of stress relief must be provided, since the routine forms of stress reduction, holiday parties and lunchtime outings, are not enough to balance the ever-increasing workload.

**Steps could be taken to increase the level of employee commitment.**  The results of this study indicated that the dimension of individual commitment to the organization is high; 46% of respondents stated that they are strongly committed to the Acquisition Center.  However, responses elicited from the interviewees provided evidence that the commitment of the workforce tended to be more focused on the success of customers and of meeting the needs of the warfighter, than on the specific success of the Acquisition Center itself.  The Acquisition Center must do what both public and private organizations have found so difficult: incentivize workers so they stop moving from one job to the next; moreover, with the loss of the experienced baby boomers due to retirement, it is of paramount importance that the Acquisition Center raise the level of commitment of its less experienced workforce.

**Employee trust in Acquisition Center leadership is waning.**  Forty-three percent of survey respondents and 72% of interviewees stated that they do not trust the organization's leaders.  While 45% of respondents believed that their leaders had good intentions, 40% were suspicious of their leaders' motives.  This lack of trust has had a negative impact on employee morale and stemmed primarily from a failure of leaders to

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effectively communicate on a micro scale, i.e. leaders are not communicating in a timely manner important workplace issues that have affected the workforce.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are provided as suggestions for improving the climate of the Acquisition Center. The dimensions of organizational climate analyzed in this study (employee involvement, work relationships, recognition of employee contributions, individual's commitment to the organization, supervision, leadership, job satisfaction, organization's commitment to the individual, worker characteristics, and job stress) are closely related and each can positively or negatively affect the others. Similarly, as described below, the recommendations for improving the climate are also interconnected. Two themes underlie the recommendations made: (1) the importance of effective communication up and down the chain-of-command; and (2) the importance of treating employees as valued contributors.

### 1. Acquisition Center Specific Recommendations

**Clear up the misconceptions held by the workforce, when possible.** This climate study revealed a snapshot of the perceptions employees had of their work environment at the time the assessment was made. Admittedly, every perception held by a group of individuals is biased by the unique natures, characteristics, backgrounds, and personalities of the members of the assessed group. Among an entire workforce, a degree of misconception (or misperception) is inevitable; however, as the saying goes, "perception is reality" and the reality is that misconceptions currently held must be identified and clarified sooner rather than later. A prime example is the promoting of individuals with fewer years of experience than in the past. Promotion decisions are made by leaders based on their perception of the needs of the current work environment; however, to a majority of the workforce, it has created a concern that the lack of experience may lead to poor business judgments by those newly promoted individuals. Creating an environment conducive to the free exchange of ideas up and down the chain-of-command will allow employees to express their concerns and leaders to provide valuable feedback to the workforce.

**Open the lines of communication.** The need for improved communication was an underlying theme of both survey and interview responses. After close examination of assessment data under the dimension of recognition of employee contributions, it is clear that employees are looking for more open lines of communication up and down the chain of command. The research results collectively suggest that the workforce desires more feedback, both positive and negative. Fifty percent of respondents said that they do not feel appreciated. This suggests two possibilities: (1) in some instances sincere recognition in some form is necessary to encourage employees to continue to work diligently; or (2) employees need some constructive criticism and redirection of their efforts. Employees may feel that they deserve recognition because they perceive that their actions, right or wrong, are the most beneficial in a given situation.

In either case, effective feedback is necessary. Survey results indicate that when given negative feedback, only 27% of respondents believe that they are clearly told what they did wrong. In addition, 100% of interviewees said that the presentation of negative feedback directly affects the way that it will be received. In order for employees to improve, managers must specifically address employee strengths and weaknesses. Recognition and feedback are related. If recognition is deserved it must be given sincerely. If corrective feedback is appropriate, that too must be communicated in a clear and constructive manner.

**Report the results of this study back to the Acquisition Center workforce.** One of the first steps to improving communication (and the climate of the Acquisition Center) is to use this assessment to ensure workers that they have a voice. Employees need to know their input is understood and considered; it is important that workers perceive that the organization and its leaders care not only about the "bottom line," but also about the people that make up the organization. The Acquisition Center has an opportunity to make an important statement to the organization's membership by using this climate study as a catalyst for improvement; reporting back to Acquisition Center employees will let them know the organization truly believes them to be the valuable assets that they are.

**Treat employees like valued contributors.**  Letting the workforce know that the organization considers employee feedback important is an essential start to acknowledging members as valued contributors.  Placing increased importance not only on employee input, but also on the work that they do to accomplish the mission and vision will increase their pride in their work and therefore improve overall productivity.  Providing feedback from this study to the workforce is only the beginning.  Treating employees like valued contributors requires greater acknowledgment of their efforts.  This can be accomplished through recognition programs based on providing opportunities that motivate performance, i.e. training in other fields, monetary incentives, or time off awards.  Employees who feel like valued contributors are more willing to take ownership of their work and be committed to doing their part in making the organization succeed.

**Increase employee commitment to the Acquisition Center.**  The level of commitment individuals feel toward the organization is directly affected by the level of commitment that they believe the organization has toward them.  Treating employees like valued contributors, opening lines of communication, and providing constructive feedback are key factors in improving the overall level of commitment that individuals have toward the organization.  Members feel that they are valued contributors when efforts are taken that improve, recognize, and reward their performance.  These steps proclaim a belief in their worth by the organization and its leaders.  This sense of appreciation for the value of individual employees encourages greater commitment to the organization, which fosters loyalty and higher retention of skilled professionals.

**Increase the level of trust.**  Trust is a two-way street: leaders must display trust in workers and workers must have faith in their leaders (Peters and Waterman, 1982).  By trusting one another, supervisors and employees build a real team, one based on the mutual cooperation of all individuals.  To improve the level of conviction within the organization, leaders must work to establish relationships founded on identification-based trust with employees.  Top leaders can improve this form of trust by conducting informal meetings with employees at all levels of the center.  The goal of these meetings should be the identification of areas within the organization where improvement is necessary.  Holding these meetings with members across Sectors and Groups in a non-attribution

environment will promote the free exchange of ideas. An important piece of the equation that cannot be left out is that changes based on participant suggestions must be acknowledged, implemented, and the results evaluated. Establishing a more effective relationship, built on identification-based trust, will improve the level of commitment that the workforce has for the organization and increase overall job satisfaction and productivity (Greenberg, 2002).

## 2.    Broad Methods for Improving Climate

At the organizational level, there are three strategies for measuring the current climate of the workplace: observing work in progress, carrying out interviews with key members of the workforce, and conducting surveys of staff members using questionnaires. The first two strategies are typically more costly and time consuming than the latter; however, in order to collect input from a large number of employees from across the organization in a relatively short time, a questionnaire is typically used to survey the workforce and evaluate key aspects of the organizational climate (2001).

Rob Altmann (2000a) states that the benefits associated with assessing the organizational climate are that the aforementioned strategies: (1) Involve employees. Give people at all levels of the organization an opportunity to be involved at a level outside the typical scope of their job description. People who are involved at work tend to experience greater levels of job satisfaction, are absent less often, display more loyalty to their organization, and perform better. (2) Create positive work outcomes. Research over the last 30 years has shown that performance is directly related to the climate of the organization. The work environment is also specifically related to employee motivation, job satisfaction, employee commitment, and the overall productivity of the organization. (3) Create an effective communication forum. Communicating with a majority of employees at all levels of the organization is a difficult task. Implementing a climate survey on a scheduled basis (perhaps yearly) and providing feedback from the survey to employees is an efficient way to give employees a voice and to provide a two-way communication forum within the organization. (4) Construct an industry comparison. Another advantage of conducting scheduled climate surveys is that they arm the organization with a benchmark evaluation to answer two questions, "Have we

improved?" and "How do we compare to others?" Essentially, this method measures whether or not improvements are being made and if the organization is receiving a return on its investment. (5) Manage proactively. Regularly conducted climate surveys bring to light specific areas where problems exist so that management can deal with them before they detrimentally affect the organization. The idea is that continually assessing the climate should help management mitigate issues before they halt productivity and require reactive attention.

Once an assessment tool is implemented, the collected data can be used to gauge the current climate. The results should supply the overall organization, and specifically managers, with the feedback they need to do their part to improve the climate of the organization. Among many other things, managers will discover what kind of a climate they are actually creating and how their people perceive it. They will also discover the following: how effectively they encourage employees to do their best; whether or not employees feel that they are recognized when they perform well; if employees really understand what is expected of them; whether or not employees feel they are receiving clear feedback; and, if supervisors are managing effectively or need to improve specific areas.

The most critical step in improving the organizational climate is to report the results of the assessment tool back to the employees. This may be done in the form of a summary report to the workforce or, even more effectively, in a management initiative designed to address the problems identified through the assessment. Research psychologist, Rob Altmann (2000b), explains that if employees do not feel that there is any return on their investment, they will be less likely to participate in management's future efforts to improve the organizational climate. Consequently, management must be prepared to respond appropriately to both the positive and negative responses from employees. Failing to provide survey feedback to the workforce makes employees feel that they have wasted their time participating and also lowers morale, since employees feel that their concerns have not been heard. In fact, they may even perceive that management does not value employee input whatsoever and is not seriously concerned about improving the organizational climate. The negative impact of failing to provide

feedback to employees makes the entire assessment a waste of resources, succeeding only in causing further damage to the organizational climate (2000b).

Chris Watkin (2001), an occupational psychologist, outlines seven crucial building blocks of healthy environments that can be utilized to improve the climate of an organization: flexibility, responsibility, performance standards, rewards and recognition programs, clarity of communication, team commitment, and leadership style. According to Watkin (2001), it is necessary to address these areas, at a minimum, in order to improve the climate in an organization.

The organizational climate will improve when flexibility by all members of the organization is encouraged. Flexibility facilitates new ideas, and keeps unnecessary rules to a minimum. It allows for quicker and more thorough customer support. Flexibility also means that management strives to get the best people together to get the job done without relying on long and time-consuming approval chains (2001).

Responsibility in the organization requires a degree of decentralization; it means involving employees, giving them the responsibility and authority to make decisions (2001). Encouraging employees to be involved is a key element in improving the organizational climate. In highly centralized organizations, where top management makes all the decisions and the rest of the organization has no input, morale tends to be extremely low, turnover is high, and the overall organizational climate is very negative. (Frank, 1984) In order to increase individual responsibility, leaders must delegate tasks to employees. Workers must be empowered; what is more, they must be held accountable for the outcomes of their decisions. "They should also be encouraged to take calculated risks without fear of blame" (Watkin, 2001). If fear of blame is not at least somewhat diminished, employees may not feel comfortable taking and/or mitigating the risks involved in their decisions.

Challenging performance standards must also be established for employees and those standards must be made clear. It is paramount that employees be made aware of their role in the organization and exactly what is expected of them. In order to utilize performance standards to facilitate an improvement in organizational climate, managers need to set "challenging but realistic goals, give regular feedback, and make sure that

performance measures are adequate and clear" (2001). Leaders should also encourage employee involvement in the setting of individual goals and standards. This gives the employee a sense of control, encouraging an internal locus of control in regard to one's performance and advancement.

Leaders, to acknowledge the superior performance of employees, should leverage rewards and recognition programs. These are powerful tools that management can take advantage of to reinforce positive behavior and improve organizational climate. Employee development opportunities are one method for both recognizing outstanding efforts and increasing performance levels. In addition, the promotion system should be used to recognize the organization's best people, allowing them to rise to the top. In conjunction with rewards and recognition programs, supervisors should utilize encouragement more often than threats and criticism when striving to improve organizational climate and increase productivity. These methods build organizational trust and bring out the highest potential in the workforce.

Watkin (2001) describes team commitment in terms of workforce loyalty; likewise, people work harder and perform better for an organization to which they feel a sense of allegiance. Actions by management that promote team unity, such as resolving conflicts quickly and fostering cooperation between individuals, will improve the climate and make employees proud members of the team. A second method to enhance team commitment is to develop teams whose members complement one another. This insures that the proper skill sets are represented in each group and prevents unwelcome job enlargement on the team. It is possible, however, to take this a step further. Team commitment should also incorporate leadership's devotion to the workforce; in other words, for "Team Commitment" to be a truly effective element in improving the organizational climate, all members of the overall team must be united.

The last aspect of climate that Watkin (2001) addresses is leadership style. He asserts that managers have an opportunity to "directly influence their employees' ability to excel by aligning their leadership/management style with the specific demands of the situation they are in and of the people that they work with. When these are out of tune, effort falls away" (2001). One way to ensure that only good climates are formed is to ask

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employees to fill out anonymous leadership questionnaires. The responses provided will assist managers in developing more than one style of management, enabling them to manage in a greater variety of situations. Table 4 lists specific management styles and their appropriate uses.

| Leadership Style | Effective when the primary objective is… |
|---|---|
| Coercive – "Do it the way I tell you." | …immediate compliance. |
| Authoritative – "This is where we are going and why." | …providing long-term direction or vision. |
| Affiliative – "It's important that we all get on." | …creating harmony. |
| Democratic – "What do you think?" | …building commitment and generating new ideas. |
| Pace-setting – "This is the way we do it." " | …accomplishing tasks to a high standard of excellence. |
| Coaching – "Here is an opportunity to practice." | …the long-term professional development of others. |

**Table 4.    Matching Leadership Styles to Organizational Needs (from Watkin, 2001)**

If individual managers can become adept at actively assessing the appropriate management style for a particular situation, then their overall effectiveness as situational leaders will increase resulting in improvements to the organizational climate. It is a developmental journey for managers, which directly links management styles to organizational situations. Utilizing the appropriate style correlates specifically to the promotion of a positive organizational climate (2001).

In conclusion, climate has a definitive influence on job satisfaction, individual job performance, and workforce productivity (Clark, 2002). The key to creating a healthy organizational climate is to: first, identify specific climatic dimensions within the organization to evaluate; second, through the use of assessment tools, such as workforce surveys and employee interviews establish a baseline measurement of the climate; and, third, with leadership support, remove the negative environmental factors that lower morale and reduce productivity to ensure the long-term success of the organization. Regularly conducted climate assessments will ensure that areas in need of improvement

are brought to light before they become detrimental to the overall health of the organization. A proactive approach allows management to mitigate issues before they require costly, reactive attention.

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# APPENDIX A.  ACQUISITION CENTER CLIMATE SURVEY

OBJECTIVE:  This survey is being used to determine the current climate of the Acquisition Center.
Responses to the following questions will provide insight into various dimensions of the organizational
climate of the Acquisition Center.  The results of this survey will be provided to the Director of the
Acquisition Center in the format of a graduate thesis on the topic of organizational climate and its effects.
The thesis will provide a baseline measurement of the organizational climate and identify potential
directions for building on the organization's successes and improving shortcomings.  Participation in this
survey is strictly <u>voluntary</u>.  All sections of the survey are <u>optional</u>.  Answers to these questions will be
collected in an <u>anonymous</u> manner; no names will be used in the submission of our research.  Thank you in
advance for your input.

## A.  EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

Use the scale below to indicate how well each statement describes your current position.  Please circle the
appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

```
        1-------------------2--------------------3-------------------4-------------------5
  Strongly Disagree     Disagree           Neutral          Agree      Strongly Agree
```

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  My job has variety. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  I am encouraged to participate in decisions that affect me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  I am given enough authority to act and make decisions about my work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  I understand what is expected of me in my current position. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  I understand what performance standards I am required to meet in my current position. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  I feel that my role in the organization is clearly defined. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## B.  WORK RELATIONSHIPS

Use the scale below to indicate how well each statement describes your relationships with your coworkers.
Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

```
        1-------------------2--------------------3-------------------4-------------------5
  Strongly Disagree     Disagree           Neutral          Agree      Strongly Agree
```

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  I feel comfortable asking my coworkers for information to do my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  It's difficult to obtain work-related advice from my coworkers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  My coworkers are willing to discuss work- | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

related problems with me.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. I enjoy friendly conversations with my coworkers. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. My coworkers respect me. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. My coworkers are my trusted friends. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I value friendships with my coworkers. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Opportunities for personal interaction are provided during the workday. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## C. RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS

Use the scale below to indicate the quality of recognition and performance feedback that you receive. Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

1--------------------2--------------------3--------------------4--------------------5
Strongly Disagree    Disagree          Neutral        Agree     Strongly Agree

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The right people in the organization are being promoted. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The workload distribution on my team is fair. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The type of recognition that I receive is in proportion to the effort I put forth and the quality of my work. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. When I do an outstanding job, I receive praise. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I feel appreciated when I work extra hard to get the job done. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. When I do something beyond the call of duty, I am given thanks. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. When I receive negative feedback, I am told clearly and specifically what I did wrong. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I receive the right balance of positive and negative feedback. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## D. INDIVIDUAL'S COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANIZATION

Use the scale below to indicate your dedication to the organization. Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

1--------------------2--------------------3--------------------4--------------------5
Strongly Disagree    Disagree          Neutral        Agree     Strongly Agree

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I clearly understand the mission and vision of the organization. | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. I understand the role that I must play to assist    1      2      3      4      5
the Acq Ctr in meeting the mission and vision
of the organization.

3. I am committed to doing my part in helping the    1      2      3      4      5
Acq Ctr meet its mission and vision.

4. I am proud to tell others that I am an employee    1      2      3      4      5
of the Acq Ctr.

5. I feel very little loyalty to the Acq Ctr.          1      2      3      4      5

6. I am strongly committed to the Acq Ctr.       1      2      3      4      5

7. I do not care about the fate of the Acq Ctr.    1      2      3      4      5

8. I would recommend the contracting career field    1      2      3      4      5
to others.

9. I rarely sought out information about other job    1      2      3      4      5
opportunities prior to BRAC.

## E. SUPERVISION

Use the scale below to describe the way the person to whom you directly report deals with you at work. Contract Specialists report to Contracting Officers, Contracting Officers report to Group Chiefs, and Group Chiefs report to Sector Chiefs. Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

1--------------------2--------------------3--------------------4--------------------5
Strongly Disagree     Disagree          Neutral        Agree     Strongly Agree

1. Supervision treats me with courtesy       1      2      3      4      5
and respect.

2. Supervisors answer my questions         1      2      3      4      5
truthfully.

3. Supervision shows appreciation for       1      2      3      4      5
my efforts and contributions.

4. Supervisors give explanations when       1      2      3      4      5
making decisions that affect me.

5. Supervision encourages me to express my    1      2      3      4      5
ideas freely.

6. Supervision freely shares information      1      2      3      4      5
with me.

7. Supervisors consult me when making      1      2      3      4      5
decisions that affect me.

8. Supervisors talk to me and know my name.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

9. My supervisor gives me guidance that　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5
remains consistent from the Team Leader
level through the Director level

## F. LEADERSHIP

Use the scale below to describe leadership in the organization, specifically, Sector Chiefs and above.
Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

```
1-------------------2--------------------3-------------------4-------------------5
Strongly Disagree    Disagree         Neutral        Agree      Strongly Agree
```

1. Communication from leaders is timely.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

2. I trust the organization's leaders.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

3. Communication from leaders is clear and open.　1　2　　3　　4　　5

4. Leaders take the time to communicate　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5
the reasoning behind critical decisions they
make.

5. I believe that our leaders have good intentions.　1　2　　3　　4　　5

6. Sector leaders keep us informed of　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5
what is going on in the Sector.

7. I trust what my leaders tell me.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

8. I am suspicious of leaders' motives.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

## G. JOB SATISFACTION

Use the scale below to indicate your current level of job satisfaction. Please circle the appropriate
response for each question using the following scale:

```
1------------------2--------------------3-------------------4-------------------5
Strongly Disagree    Disagree         Neutral        Agree      Strongly Agree
```

1. I am satisfied with the work activities that　1　2　　3　　4　　5
make up my job.

2. I am satisfied with my coworkers.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

3. I am satisfied with my supervisor.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

4. I am satisfied with top leadership.　　1　　2　　3　　4　　5

5. I am satisfied with my opportunities for career　1　2　　3　　4　　5
advancement.

6. All things considered, I am satisfied with my　1　2　　3　　4　　5
job.

7. I will be able to cope with my current workload as long as I want.    1     2     3     4     5

8. I am satisfied with the challenges of my current position.    1     2     3     4     5

## H. ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENT TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Use the scale below to indicate the degree of support you receive from your organization. Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

1--------------------2--------------------3--------------------4--------------------5
Strongly Disagree    Disagree       Neutral       Agree     Strongly Agree

1. I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills at the Acq Ctr through education and training programs.    1     2     3     4     5

2. I am required to complete too many training hours.    1     2     3     4     5

3. The amount of training that I am required to complete improves my job performance.    1     2     3     4     5

4. The Acq Ctr cares about my well-being.    1     2     3     4     5

5. The Acq Ctr values my contribution to its well-being.    1     2     3     4     5

6. The Acq Ctr strongly considers my goals and values.    1     2     3     4     5

7. I feel that I am an important part of the team.    1     2     3     4     5

8. I feel that others are open to my suggestions.    1     2     3     4     5

9. I have a hard time finding information that I need to do my job.    1     2     3     4     5

10. I am treated like a valued contributor.    1     2     3     4     5

## I. WORKER CHARACTERISTICS

Use the scale below to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

1--------------------2--------------------3--------------------4--------------------5
Strongly Disagree    Disagree       Neutral       Agree     Strongly Agree

1. I pay attention to details.    1     2     3     4     5

2. I am always prepared.    1     2     3     4     5

3. I complete assignments on time.    1     2     3     4     5

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. | I sympathize with others' feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | I like to be the center of attention. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | I am comfortable dealing with people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | I keep in the background. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | I can handle uncomfortable situations at work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | I feel in control of my work situation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | I believe my personal decisions and efforts determine my success in the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## J. JOB STRESS

Use the scale below to indicate how accurately each statement describes the amount of stress you are experiencing at work. Please circle the appropriate response for each question using the following scale:

1--------------------2--------------------3-------------------4-------------------5
Strongly Disagree    Disagree          Neutral          Agree      Strongly Agree

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Dealing with leaders and supervisors is stressful. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | Daily contracting processes cause stress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | Difficulties using Electronic Tools cause stress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | Fulfilling training requirements is stressful. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | Meeting the required Procurement Acquisition Lead Time (cycle time) produces stress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | The prospect of moving to a new team causes stress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | My experience level in the contracting field in relation to my current position creates stress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | Factors in my home life cause stress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | My commute to and from work is stressful. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | My current workload creates stress. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## RESPONDENT INFORMATION

Please provide the following demographic information to help us interpret the results of this survey.

1. Length of Government Employment:_____

2. Are you in the 1102 Job Series:   1102\_\_\_\_        Other\_\_\_\_
3. Years in Current Position:\_\_\_\_\_
4. Sector:  A\_\_\_\_      B\_\_\_\_       C\_\_\_\_      D\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you worked in the Acq Ctr? _____Years
6. Since being employed by the Acq Ctr, on how many different teams have you worked?:\_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you currently provide care for loved ones:   Yes_____      No\_\_\_\_\_
8. What is the distance you travel from home to work:   \_\_\_\_\_

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# APPENDIX B.  INTERVIEW OUTLINE AND QUESTIONS

**<u>Introduction</u>:**
We are currently conducting interviews in order to assess the organizational climate of the C-E LCMC Acquisition Center.  The responses you provide, in conjunction with survey results that we obtain from the workforce population, will be used to determine the overall climate of the Acquisition Center in an effort to improve the retention rate of highly skilled contracting professionals. We will then analyze the data collected to compile our graduate thesis for Naval Postgraduate School.

**<u>Disclaimer</u>:**
To maintain confidentiality, no names will be used in the compilation of the interview results.  All responses provided to this interview will be anonymous.  In addition, prior to publishing our results, we will provide you with a written copy of your interview responses for your review, comment, and approval.  Thank you in advance for your input.

**<u>Questions</u>:**

### Employee Involvement

Do you feel that you are being challenged in you current position? *(In the type of work you are given and the responsibilities placed on you?)*  How about from the workload perspective – is it hard to keep up with the quantity of work you are to assume?  Do you feel in general that the workload is fairly distributed?  Would you use a different method to distribute work more evenly across contract specialists or teams?

Are you provided the opportunity to make decisions that directly affect the work you do?  *(In other words, are you given the freedom to make decisions relating to the performance of your duties?)*  Are you held accountable for the consequences of those decisions?

Has what is expected of you been made clear?  Not just your performance standards but what your specific role is on the team or in the group? For example, are you just pushing paper *(doing mods and delivery orders)* or are you a business manager making important, professional decisions that affect your contract, program, customer, etc…?

### Work Relationships

How would you characterize your relationships with co-workers, i.e. are you all business, strictly social, or both?  Is this your choice or is there something restricting you from acting in accordance with your basic personality? Are you comfortable discussing work topics with co-workers?  How do you feel discussing personal issues with co-workers?  Are there specific topics that are more difficult than others to discuss or one's that you strictly avoid?

**Worker Characteristics**

Can you briefly describe your personality? For instance, would you say you prefer to be the life of the party? Are you a believer in fate? Do you feel you are in control of your work situations?

How focused are you on following processes, or preset procedures in order, one by one? *(Do you make lists of "things to do"? Do you believe the devil is in the details?)* Are you the type of person who is only comfortable when given time to be extremely prepared or do you prefer to "fly by the seat of your pants"? Do you see positive and negative feedback as a way to improve or as a criticism of your character?

**Supervision**

Do you think of your supervisor as your mentor or just your boss? Are your contributions recognized? How? *(verbal only, plaques, etc.?)* When appropriate, does your supervisor explain the decisions that he/she makes, i.e. are these decisions used as learning tools for employee development? Does your supervisor solicit your opinions/ideas?

**Recognition of Employee Contributions**

Do you feel that you are provided feedback from team leaders, Sector Chiefs, etc.? Are you provided with both positive and negative feedback? One more than the other? Too much of either?

Do you believe that the right people are recognized for their accomplishments? Are the right people being promoted? Given the current environment *(the departure of the baby boomers)*, are individuals being promoted too quickly or too slowly in the organization? In your opinion, are experienced people being promoted? Are you supportive even to those who you believe are less experienced/qualified?

**Individual's Commitment to the Organization**

OUR MISSION: To provide our customers value-added acquisition business solutions that support the joint Warfighter.

Are you committed to the success of our organization? Are you more committed to the organization or to meeting the needs of the warfighter? Or both?
Are you committed to the mission of the organization? Are you proud to be a DA Civilian working in the Acquisition Center? What level of commitment do you feel specifically to the Acquisition Center? Prior to the BRAC announcement, were you actually seeking employment elsewhere? What could be done to increase your level of commitment?

**Leadership**

Do you feel communication from leaders is presented on a timely basis and in a clear manner?  Are the reasons for the decisions made clear?  Do you trust that your leaders have the needs of the workforce in mind when they make decisions?  Do you trust what they tell you?

Is Acquisition Center leadership approachable?  Do you feel comfortable communicating with leadership?

**Job Satisfaction**

Do you enjoy working in the field of acquisition?  Do you like the job that you currently perform for the Acquisition Center?  Are you happy with your position/grade level in the organization?

**Organization's Commitment to the Individual**

Do you believe that the Acquisition Center is focused on making you effective as a contracting professional?  Are you being provided the training you need to excel?  Does the amount of training you are given enable allow you to become better at your job?  Do you feel the amount of required training you must complete prevents you from being effective at your job?  Is it possible to get too much training?

Do you feel the Acquisition Center cares about you as an individual?  Are you made to feel like an integral part of the contracting team?

**Job Stress**

What do you feel is the greatest source of stress you experience at work?  *(workload, work relationships, personal responsibilities, managerial role, daily contracting hassles, organizational climate, extent of recognition?)*  Do you have the necessary organizational support system to help you accomplish your job on a daily basis?

Do you believe that any of your personal characteristics contribute to the level of stress that you feel at work?  *(your patience level, ability to influence, the level of control you have in your position, personality type, your natural focus, lack of confidence, ability to balance work/home/school/)*

What are some possible solutions to relieve some of the stress you experience?

How do you feel the level of stress you experience at work affects you?  Do you feel it affects your degree of job satisfaction?  Do you notice physical symptoms that could be contributed to increased levels of stress *(loss of patience, short temper, lack of focus, inability to communicate effectively)*?

Outside of work, are there particular circumstances that you find stressful? For instance, do you have a stressful commute? Do you have a personal support system, either at work or outside of work, to help you deal with difficult situations?

## Closing:

We thank you for your time today. We will type up the notes from our conversation today and allow you to look them over prior to their use in our study of the organizational climate of the Acquisition Center. Just to remind you the answers you provided will remain confidential and no names will be used in the final submission of our research. Thank you again for your input.

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