

NMCI Transition

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NMCI TRANSITION

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To

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In October 2000, garrison data network management would be transformed due to the Marine Corps transition to the Navy and Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI). In December of 1999 the Navy and Marine Corps solicited proposals from the civilian sector for a contractor to be able to provide secure, universal, and interoperable network based services to the Navy and Marine Corps. This organization would be the key to help the Navy and Marine Corps transition to the Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI). The solicitation period ended in February of 2000 and the subsequent contract was awarded on 6 October 2000 to Electronic Data Systems (EDS). The awarding of this contract to EDS marked the expiration of the days when the G6/S6 maintained all the necessary rights and privileges to manage garrison and deployed data system networks with their teams/sections of enlisted Marines. The transition to NMCI was a good idea on paper, but was not a good move for the Marine Corps. The transition to the Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI) impedes the ability of the eG6/S6 to provide responsive and flexible data network services to users, causes the data system Marines to be underutilized and decreases the knowledge base of data system Marines with the Corps.

Since the transition to NMCI, no longer does the G-6 have the capability to provide a data network that is responsive and flexible. Proponents of the NMCI transition would state that since the transition to NMCI, the level of service provided has remained the same; but this is not the case. While assigned to G-6, 3d Force Service Support Group, I had a chance to see and experience the level of service that the G-6 was able to provide. The G-6 consisted of several Marines who ran the help desk. The Marines assigned to the help desk managed the network, answered trouble calls, installed new software, and repaired/replaced computer components within its capability. In order to extend support to the individual user level, G-6 would provide training for integrated system coordinators (ISC's). In order to be able to provide a quicker service at the local user level, ISC's were injected by the G-6 in order to decrease response time and to keep the G-6 from getting inundated with a myriad of phone calls with things that could be handled at the local level by the ISC. The ISC provided immediate attention to the local user in trying to help solve computer problems. If the local ISC could not solve the problem, the problem would be forwarded to the G-6 help desk for resolution. In regards to flexible network, previously if a user needed some kind of software that was mission essential; the user would submit a request to G-6 to have the software installed. The G-6 was the

authority for approval for additional software being loaded on a computer. Once the request was received, the G-6 would test the software on the network, ensuring that it was compatible to the current operating system. If there were no complications, the G-6 would direct the ISC at the local level to install the computer software. While at G-6, 3d FSSG I have witnessed the completion of this process in 25-30 days. The 25-30 day turnaround for software authorization is no longer possible under NMCI. Since NMCI implementation, this process has taken anywhere from 90 days or greater.

Before the implementation of NMCI the G6/S6 possessed the authority and administrative rights to manage garrison and deployed data system networks. Changes to the network to support mission accomplishment could be very quickly made. In instances where a quick change out of a computer system was merited, the S6 had the authority to swap out computers so that the user was impacted minimally. In some cases, the G-6 may have an "extra" computer that could be provided to the user on a temporary basis until the malfunctioning computer was repaired. The G6/S6's had the authority to make the necessary changes that enhanced mission accomplishment. Since the introduction of NMCI, Marines no longer have administrative rights, which would allow them to provide responsive and flexible service to the user. All network

administration and a civilian company, Electronic Data Systems (EDS), now handles repair/replacement of computers. Now Marines in garrison must contact the NMCI help desk to resolve computer and network problems. This centralized management has eliminated the ISC who could provide immediate attention and has put Marines in a situation where they must call in and discuss an issue with someone over the phone instead of having that immediate face-to-face contact with a data Marine or a trained integrated system specialist. In cases where an individual's computer has a hard drive failure; the user must wait until an EDS representative comes on site. If the computer happens to have the hard drive failure during the evening, they must wait until the morning until an EDS representative can come on site. When the G6/S6 had garrison administrative rights, this would not happen because the G6/S6 had a person on duty that could solve the problem during the night and have the person's computer ready to go that same night or the next morning. This level of service is unacceptable. While serving as the S6 for MSSG 31, one night the S-3's computer had a hard drive failure. Because my Marines had administrative rights to the computer and the network, they were able to give the S-3 another computer and he was back up and running in about 2 hours. Under NMCI, the S-3 would have had to call the NMCI help desk and wait until the morning until a help desk technician could be called in.

Another case happened with the S-1 chief computer was not recognized by the network. My Marines were able y Marines were able to get him back on line in approximately an hour. This was the level of service that we were able to achieve because we had administrative rights on the network. Under NMCI, this level of service not available unless the individual's computer is designated as a critical asset and naturally, all computers cannot be designated as a critical asset.

Since Marines are no longer needed for garrison data network management; what is being done with them. In conversations with the deputy G-6's for Marine Corps Base Quantico and Training and Education Command I have gained insight on the impact that NMCI has had on our enlisted data Marines. The enlisted data Marines are underutilized. When the transition to NMCI was implemented, Marines that worked for the G-6 were stripped of their administrative rights that allowed them to manage the network. These Marines are now unable to be employed in data network management. As Marines are waiting for permanent change of station orders or reassignment; it is very difficult to employ them for the purpose that they went to MOS school. In some cases, a couple of Marines were allowed to maintain their administrative rights so that they could assist EDS employees. There are many cases in which the Marines were able to solve

problems that EDS employees were not able to solve. Although the Marines were stripped of their administrative rights, the G-6's did its best to keep the Marines productive. Data Marines were provided training that would allow them to broaden their horizons and prepare them for MCSE certifications. Once EAS's came around, Marines were sent back to the Operating Forces. Although the G-6 tried its best, there were times that data Marines performed some kind of "busy" work or were provided opportunities to attend civilian courses/education. A data system Marine without administrative rights is unable to be fully employed. The transition to NMCI has caused our data system Marines to be underutilized. Although many have tried, it is difficult to keep Marines productive when they no longer have a billet or administrative rights available.

Proponents of the NMCI transition state that Marines are getting better training as a result of NMCI. Since the NMCI implementation; Marines have been given an opportunity to be assigned to an NMCI training detachment. The NMCI training detachment is an organization that is ran by Marines which helps Marines to be able to gain valuable network experience and earn certifications. Although the individual Marine is allowed to gain experience; this program will hinder the ability of the Marine Corps to maintain individuals with a wealth of experience

because their ability to maintain a certain level is not possible. NMCI detachment training is available to individual Marines on a one time basis. The requirement is based upon rank and MOS. In order to qualify for a position the data system Marine must be the rank of Sgt thru GySgt. There is no exception to the rank or MOS requirement. Approximately 70 seats are available each year for Marines. If selected for the program, the Marine will be assigned to an EDS help desk for 2 years and will be able to achieve certifications that are paid for by EDS and be able to experience true network management. Once a Marine successfully completes the 2-year tour with EDS, the Marine must immediately serve 3 years in the operating forces. The goal of this was to provide Marine 2 yrs with EDS and then send him to the operating forces with a wealth of knowledge. What happens when a Marine want to get reassigned to EDS, this will not happen. Whatever experienced gained at EDS will be all that the Marine will bring to the operating forces. Not being able to experience the EDS training on a continuous basis will not allow the Marine to reach the next level of network administration as new technologies are introduced in garrison networks. Assignment to EDS is a one-time deal, no exceptions. Before the transition to NMCI, Marines were exposed to network administration as low as the rank of LCpl. The majority of the proficient and knowledgeable data system Marines were maintained at the G-6.

These Marines could work wonders on the network and were often requested by name. The G-6 provided for a well-rounded experience that would allow a sharp data Marine to gain experience at G-6 at the macro level, and then be pushed down to the CommCo/Sqdrn level for a year, which would allow the Marine to gain the tactical experience and then come back to the G-6. In other cases, a data Marine would be attached to Communications Company/Communications Squadron for an exercise or was in general support of an exercise. With this kind of system in place, Marines were able to continue to hone their skills because they were able to be assigned to G-6 and were able to experience tactical communications. This experience would allow the Marine Corps to maintain a wealth of knowledge within the operating forces because data system Marines were continuously getting tactical and garrison experience and the experience could begin at the rank of Lance Corporal. NMCI only allows a one-time experience in garrison experience.

The transition to the Navy Marine Corps Intranet will continue to have a negative impact upon the data communications field. Marines have been totally excluded from garrison network management. This exclusion will create a network that is less responsive to the needs of the Marine Corps because a civilian agency does not truly understand the ethos of the Marine Corps

and will not make decisions or provide service that will decrease its profits because the goal of the civilian agency is to make profits. Over time our core capabilities in the data systems field will continue to degrade because Marines are not exposed to the same level of experience that was available before the transition to NMCI. The NMCI contract will expire in 2010. The Marine Corps should not renew this contract with any agency.

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