

Focusing on the “Big E” The First Naval IT Summit

By Lynda Pierce



“Each of you represents an enterprise and all of us together represent an Enterprise. It is the all of us together Enterprise that we want to spend a little bit of time on.”

- Mr. David Wennergren, DON CIO



“We have to try to converge these [‘little e’] efforts so that we do something that’s good for the entire Navy.”

*- Rear Adm. Tom Zelibor,
DON Deputy CIO, Navy*



“The Strategic Plan captures what we’re really about. It’s Big E and little e; whichever camp you’re in, you’re important.”

*- Brig. Gen. John Thomas,
DON Deputy CIO, Marine Corps*

December 16-17, 2003, marked a major milestone in the Department of the Navy’s effort to strengthen and align its Information Management/Information Technology organization with the convening of the first-ever Naval IT Summit. The summit was the first gathering of the new IM/IT leadership team with their Navy and Marine Corps commands.

The summit marked the culmination of a restructuring that began in 2003 when the Secretary of the Navy appointed Brig. Gen. John Thomas and Rear Adm. Thomas Zelibor as DON Deputy CIOs for the Marine Corps and Navy respectively. Mr. Robert Carey serves as DON Deputy CIO for Policy and Integration. The three deputies, along with the DON CIO, Mr. David Wennergren, collectively provide the executive leadership necessary to align Department-wide IM/IT efforts with warfighter priorities.

The Naval IT Summit provided a forum for senior IM/IT leadership to meet face to face with Information Officers from Navy Echelon II and Marine Corps major subordinate commands. It enabled them to focus on creating a shared vision of how the DON IM/IT community will work together to advance the creation and continued enhancement of a single, integrated Naval IT Enterprise. The summit also afforded an opportunity to continue building close working relationships up and down the chains of command of the newly restructured Navy-Marine Corps team.

Each Navy and Marine Corps command represents an enterprise — “little e.” However, during the summit, participants were encouraged to focus on the “Big E” — the larger Navy-Marine Corps Enterprise.

For solving Big E challenges, Dr. Barry Frew, former professor and Director of the Center for Executive Education at the Naval Postgraduate School, guided attendees through the use of Appreciative Inquiry. AI accelerates organizational breakthroughs by providing a framework and set of rules to help keep discussion focused on positive change.

Attendees were encouraged to share positive Big E experiences they have had during their careers in the DON. The experiences they shared were varied and included: (1) the transition to NMCI, which changed a fragmented IT structure to an Enterprise focus; (2) the rationalization of legacy applications that resulted in the elimination of tens of thousands of legacy and redundant applications; (3) the fact that the Navy-Marine Corps IM/IT team was aligned, and the Naval IT Summit was actually occurring.

Breakout sessions honed in on IT successes and challenges. By the end of the first day, it became clear that the Big E issues on most attendees’ minds were related to Technology, Process, Community, Knowledge, Capital Planning and Governance. These became the focal points for the remainder of the summit.

With these six areas as their focus, attendees were encouraged to regroup and join teams according to their interests and passions. Applying their energy and resources to areas that they thought needed work, the teams came up with unique approaches to solving Big E challenges.

The Governance team conceived quite a few possible pilots, but narrowed them down to four high value pilots to work on: (1) Deconflict a set of existing policies and publish new policy; (2) Define roles and responsibilities to resolve ambiguity; (3) Analyze governance for a particular business segment to see how to move toward desired governance; and (4) Develop an overarching document that defines guiding principles, roles and responsibilities and operational differences of Big E and little e.

The Process team brainstormed and proposed a pilot project to develop an Enterprise view of requirements to include assessing existing tools and requirements, aligning existing systems and processes, and using the Navy Marine Corps Portal as the interface to view and access tools. By the end of the summit, all of the groups had identified pilot projects related to their areas, the teams had selected leaders, and team members had committed to continue working on their Big E pilots. To facilitate virtual team collaboration, Capt. Skip Hiser of Task Force Web, volunteered to set up a collaboration site on the Navy Enterprise Portal.

These independent, self-governing, virtual teams agreed to take the pilot ideas they conceived at the summit and continue to work to make them happen. Their progress will be monitored by the Operational Advisory Board, which is an IT management forum, chaired by Rear Adm. Zelibor and Brig. Gen. John Thomas.

The Naval IT Summit set the stage for important discussion among the Department's IM/IT leaders to resolve what each must do to enable the transformation that will realize network-centric warfare, knowledge dominance, and the increases in business and warfighting effectiveness that these capabilities will achieve. The Navy and Marine Corps change leaders attending the summit realized that vision and strategy must translate into action, and embraced their roles in directing and shaping IT — not just for their commands, but also for the Big E.

A second Naval IT Summit is planned for June 8-10, 2004. This summit will afford the teams the opportunity to report on their progress, focus on how the IM/IT team can improve their execution skills, learn organizational skills to take back to their commands, and continue building relationships with their fellow change leaders and the DON IM/IT executive leadership team.

Look for the *CHIPS Summer 2004* issue to read about the next Naval IT Summit.

Go to page 24 for descriptions of the eGov Awards presented at the summit.

Lynda Pierce provides communications and public affairs support to the DON CIO. 

Below: Photographs of attendees of the first-ever Naval IT Summit. The Naval IT Summit provided a forum for senior IM/IT leadership to meet face to face with Information Officers from Navy Echelon II and Marine Corps major subordinate commands.

