

The DEAMS factor

Core accounting system essential to mission

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Nearly a full year ago, the Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System was introduced as a “Technology Demonstration” at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., and U.S. Transportation Command, with the overall objective of becoming the Air Force’s core accounting system. The program and functional management offices experienced many challenges and rewards as they worked to develop a strategy for moving DEAMS forward.

Along the journey, the Office of the Secretary of Defense identified DEAMS as a pilot program under the new Business Capability Lifecycle streamlined acquisition process. The new BCL strategy requires system stabilization, emergence from the technology

demonstration and a full deployment decision. These steps are needed before deploying DEAMS to additional Air Mobility Command bases in FY12. Further deployment beyond AMC bases will be done incrementally at 12- to 24-month intervals until DEAMS is Air Force wide.

The unified DEAMS leadership quickly embraced the BCL process, which provided the framework for the new strategy adjusted by the lessons learned in the technology demonstration. The strategy was successfully presented to the Combined Investment Review Board in January 2011. The outcome is a signed Acquisition Decision Memorandum with clear and supportive direction for the way forward.

The key activities authorized in the ADM are to sustain and stabilize DEAMS capability at Scott AFB and to develop blueprints and functional designs for

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future increments. The support for sustainment of the existing environment is a vital acknowledgement that DEAMS is serving a mission-essential capability as the core accounting system at Scott AFB.

Stabilization means to improve both the existing functional processes and technical infrastructure. More specifically, the technical demonstration generated key insight into the output results of the system configurations for the supported accounting processes. On the technical infrastructure side, issues were identified and plans are in process to improve system availability.

DEAMS alone does not achieve the objective of auditability. The future incremental releases will be coordinated with the overall Financial Improvement Plan for Audit Readiness. Targeted assessments and audits will be performed. Policies and procedures will be needed at every step of the way in order to reinforce

consistency of new business processes. There must be true dedication to applying standardized processes by all financial managers across the Air Force. We can all expect changes from the legacy environments we use today.

DEAMS will be an enabler; however, the total force effort needed to realize the ultimate goal cannot be understated. I encourage the financial management community to gear up and be ready when you are called upon to lead in any aspect of the Financial Improvement Plan, and especially when DEAMS arrives at your door.

More information will be available in the coming months as realistic plans are developed to move beyond the technology demonstration and into an increasingly integrated solution for overall financial improvement. *(Reprinted from the SAF/FM On-Line Newsletter)*

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Spiral 2 survey results reveal user experiences

User ratings and 481 comments from the Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System Spiral 2 Post Deployment End-User Survey have been analyzed and tabulated, revealing several lessons learned and recommendations for future DEAMS deployments.

The survey was posted online Oct. 18 through Nov. 15 and made available to all 1,246 registered DEAMS users. More than 280, or 23 percent, of them rated their experiences involving Web-based and instructor-led training, deployment, communications, data collection, system usability, and overall experience. Support resources such as the help desk, DEAMS Organization Liaisons, and Unit Assistance Task Force members from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service were also included.

The questions

The survey consisted of 66 questions, 57 of which were rated on a five-point Likert Scale measuring a level of agreement or disagreement; “Neutral” and “Not Applicable” were also frequent choices. There were nine open-ended questions.

References to positive or negative responses throughout this article represent the percentage of respondents who indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed, or disagreed or strongly disagreed

with a statement in the survey. High numbers of “Neutral” or “Not Applicable” reduced the strength of agreements and disagreements in several instances.

The participants

Respondents represented Air Mobility Command Headquarters (23.6 percent), U.S. Transportation Command (17.6 percent), 375th Air Mobility Wing (16.4 percent), DFAS (12.8 percent), the DEAMS Functional Management Office (9.6 percent), 131st Bomb Wing (8 percent), Air Force Network Integration Center (7.2 percent), and the 932nd Airlift Wing and 183rd Fighter Wing (each with 2.4 percent of respondents). Of the 283 respondents, 66 percent were frequent users who accessed the system at least weekly; 42 percent reported Financial Management as their primary duty. Sixty-one percent were already familiar with DEAMS, having accessed it during Spiral 1.

Resource Advisors and Timekeepers were the most-represented roles, followed by Requestor and/or External Approver. Financial Services Officer was the least represented DEAMS role. Although the Timekeeper role had not been activated at the time, their participation was beneficial in providing input on training and other deployment activities. Many of the Timekeepers also performed additional tasks in DEAMS.

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Survey responses were confidential and cannot be linked back to individuals.

Training

According to the survey results, satisfaction with instructor-led training was moderate with the highest ratings for the instructors' knowledge about DEAMS (57 percent agreement). The lowest ratings were for overall preparedness to use DEAMS after completing ILT (53 percent), followed by dissatisfaction with the length (41 percent) and the comprehensiveness of the training (37 percent).

Although ratings showed satisfaction with the instructors' level of DEAMS knowledge, the most frequently recurring themes within the ILT survey comments were the need for instructors to be more knowledgeable about DEAMS (12 percent). The need for the training to be more tailored to the actual job duties (12 percent), and the perception that the ILT training received was not relevant to the job (10 percent) were also noted.

For Web-based training, respondents reported moderate satisfaction with the usefulness of the supplemental training materials (36 percent) and the comprehensiveness of the all materials (38 percent). The greatest satisfaction centered on the material being presented in an organized, logical order (53

percent) while the most dissatisfaction was for overall preparedness to use DEAMS after Web-based training (40 percent).

The most frequently recurring theme within the WBT survey comments was the need for the training to be more tailored to the actual job duties (39 percent), followed by the need for training to be hands on (11 percent) and issues with training materials (11 percent).

Recommendations: Training needs to be tailored and directly relevant to the specific job duties, and trainers need to be well versed in the subject matter.

Support

Most survey respondents knew how to contact the DEAMS Help Desk (91 percent), but fewer had actually called for assistance (68 percent). Fewer still were aware of weekly teleconferences available to users during the deployment (52 percent) or actually called into the sessions for guidance (32 percent).

Of those who offered an opinion about the help desk, very few expressed dissatisfaction with staff performance (9 percent on average). Most felt that the help desk provided assistance in a timely manner (49 percent) and/or expressed overall satisfaction with it (42 percent).

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The professionalism of the help desk staff is evidenced by the amount of associated comments, although some respondents acknowledged that the staff was unable to resolve issues due to factors beyond their control. Some remarked that the help desk staff is not well trained. This may be due to a lack of insight about the function of the DEAMS Help Desk, which is primarily to serve as a triage station to assess the nature of issues, open a remedy ticket, and then forward the ticket to the appropriate experts for resolution.

The common thread amongst the DOL and task force member comments was the observation that respondents were not aware of the DOLs or task force members who had been assigned to provide DEAMS support. There was a notable decline in participant agreement from knowing how to contact the DOLs and task force members (41 percent), to actually seeking their support for assistance (32 percent), to the DOLs or task force members being able to provide support (28 percent).

Recommendations: Maintain current levels of customer focus at the help desk but increase the staff's education, expedite the triage and ticket resolution processes, increase user awareness of DOLs and improve their support to users, and increase leadership visibility and support for the deployment.

Deployment

Eight percent of the survey respondents agreed with the statement, "The transition to DEAMS went smoothly" while 67 percent disagreed. Twenty percent felt prepared for the transition, but they were outnumbered by those who did not feel prepared for the transition (46 percent). Slightly less than half of the respondents felt supported in the transition by their immediate and/or senior leadership (48 percent and 42 percent, respectively).

The main themes among the deployment comments involved issues with DEAMS training and functionality. In addition, many respondents communicated the need for better transition support.

Recommendations: Consider the least-impactful timing for future deployments, involve users in deployment planning to incorporate their perspectives, communicate and plan in advance for realistic workload impacts, and provide greater transition assistance.

Communication

Users were asked to select multiple communication channels to indicate how they typically receive information about DEAMS. Overwhelmingly, they receive their DEAMS communications through

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email, followed word of mouth. One-third of users receive their DEAMS communications via face-to-face meetings, paper-based, and/or Web-based communications.

When asked to indicate their single most preferred method of receiving DEAMS-related information, half of the users selected “Email.” Twelve percent prefer face-to-face meetings while 8 percent want internal leadership communication.

More than 90 percent of the survey respondents were aware of the impending transition to DEAMS and 62 percent agreed that the DEAMS communications about the transition were timely. Thirty-two percent felt that the DEAMS communications were easy to understand; however, 35 percent did not. Forty-four percent did not feel that communications about DEAMS training were timely enough to make proper accommodations.

Of the 239 survey participants who answered the question about their attendance at one of four base-wide DEAMS kickoff meetings held at Scott Air Force Base two months prior to deployment, 41 percent indicated that they attended a meeting. An equal number of people (39 percent) were either neutral about or disagreed that they gained understanding about DEAMS at the meetings; 22

percent agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, 43 percent were neutral about whether the meetings addressed their concerns, while 20 percent agreed or strongly agreed and 36 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Recommendations: Consider “one-stop shopping” for DEAMS education, information and updates; consider email and face-to-face communications from leadership as primary methods for relaying messages about DEAMS; and schedule training courses with ample lead time to minimize mission impact.

Data collection

Sixty percent of survey respondents answered questions about the online data collection tool used to collect user background information and assign DEAMS responsibilities. The tool, called the Government Electronic Certification and Authorization System, prompted users to complete an electronic DD Form 2875 that is required for online access into DEAMS. Fifty-three percent of respondents felt that GeCAS was easy to use, while slightly less (47 percent) felt that the process was efficient. Fifty-seven percent of respondents felt that GeCAS resulted in the correct assignment of DEAMS roles and responsibilities.

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Several users commented that the data collection process requires too much rework or that there were issues with DEAMS responsibility assignments. Users also commented that the GeCAS guidance needs improvement.

Recommendations: streamline the user data collection process to eliminate multiple inputs; and define, document and convey role definitions to increase understanding of DEAMS tasks.

System usability

There was a general sense of disagreement about several aspects of DEAMS, including users' ability to easily navigate and find information. Users were also mixed in their opinions about the overall look and feel of DEAMS.

Three themes dominated users' comments about DEAMS system usability:

- DEAMS causes additional time and/or workload.
- DEAMS is not user-friendly.
- Data is inaccurate and/or unreliable.

Similar proportions of users felt they understood (38 percent) or did not understand (35 percent) the impact

DEAMS would have on their jobs. More than half (54 percent) felt their workload increased as a result of DEAMS while 45 percent felt that DEAMS had a negative impact on the accuracy of their work, at least in the short time span following the deployment.

Recommendations: Assess and communicate realistic workload impacts, and consider measures to improve users' ability to generate reliable and accurate data.

Overall experience

At the time of the survey, five months after deployment and just on the heels of the fiscal year closeout, overall satisfaction with DEAMS was low (17 percent) while the majority of those who indicated a preference were not satisfied with the end product (48 percent).

Recommendations: Re-evaluate perceptions due to low satisfaction immediately following the deployment.

DEAMS officials will consider the survey results and recommendations as they continue planning for future DEAMS deployments.



GAO audit

Jeff Isaacs, Chris Martin and Darby Smith (far right), financial management inspectors from the Government Accountability Office in Washington, D.C., listen and take notes during a meeting with DEAMS functional managers and subject matter experts May 6. The auditors were at the DEAMS Functional Management Office to observe the DEAMS end-to-end processes. They previously were at the program management office in Dayton, Ohio, to observe program functions. Also pictured left to right are Noel Denlinger, Randy Newcome, Russ Mielke, Wendy Colestock and Nancy-Jeanne Rosenberg (partially hidden).



AFWay II demo

Pat Beasley, Air Force Way Program Manager (standing), leads an AFWay II discussion between members of the DEAMS Functional Management Office, U.S. Transportation Command and SRA International during a demonstration at the FMO April 29. AFWAY II is an online application designed to provide consistency with and simplify the requisitioning process. Part of the discussion included the potential for DEAMS and AFWAY II to interface. Both applications are Oracle based, reside on the Global Combat Support System-Air Force, and are accessed through the Air Force Portal. Pictured left to right are Noel Denlinger, John Hennigan, Mike Mason, Maureen Childress, Patsy Frisch, Paula Morris, Beasley, Scott Singleton, and Tony Zarbano.



Spreading the news

Michael Sorrento (center), chief information officer for the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Financial Management and Comptroller, uses a working lunch to explain DEAMS to several members of a Congressional staff delegation that visited the Functional Management Office and Scott AFB, Ill., April 26. Russ Mielke and Randy Newcome (top left), DEAMS Functional Managers for U.S. Transportation Command and the Air Force, respectively, stand by with Patsy Frisch, DEAMS Functional Manager for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (not pictured) to answer questions.



Riddle me this

Paula Hadeler, a DEAMS Organization Liaison for Air Mobility Command's Communications Directorate (A6), references a projected slide while posing questions to Noel Denlinger (second from left) during a DEAMS Functional Management Office meeting and teleconference with DOLs. The FMO brought the DOLs together to discuss issues and answer questions. At least 19 DEAMS user organizations were represented at the April 26 meeting. Also pictured are Dave McGee, DEAMS FMO; and Vickie Bernreuter, AMC/A6.

DEAMS Transitions

Departing

Khadidra Wood
Secure Data Inc.
Sustainment



Stock image

**Father's Day
is June 19**

DEAMS Outreach

DEAMS at PDI

DEAMS will be on display June 1-2 at the American Society of Military Comptrollers Professional Development Institute in Minneapolis.

The Air Force service day on June 1 will feature a DEAMS workshop, "Coming Soon: DEAMS in Development," an overview of systems interfaces and discussions on how DEAMS will deploy to the rest of the Air Force and U.S. Transportation Command components.



Need a speaker?

Do you have an upcoming event? Regional conference? Mini-PDI?

DEAMS speakers are available to update your group on the current status of DEAMS as well as the way ahead.

Contact the DEAMS Functional Management Office at (618) 622-5700.

DEAMS
Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System

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DEAMS is a financial management initiative that will transform business and financial management processes and systems to provide accurate, reliable, and timely business information to support effective business decision making for U.S. Transportation Command, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), and the U.S. Air Force.

DEAMS News & Events

- April Newsletter
- Conference Explores DEAMS Rollout To ANG
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All photos by the *Current Account* staff unless otherwise noted.