

Good, better, best

Pat Finneran, vice president of Program Management & Business Excellence for Integrated Defense Systems, speaks to Boeing leaders at a Program Managers Workshop during this past summer at the Boeing Leadership Center in St. Louis.

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After 10 years, program management best practices have proven their worth

By DIANA EASTMAN

It was 1998, the year of Harry Potter, Google . . . and the rollout of Boeing's program management best practices. OK, maybe the best practices haven't experienced the same fanfare as the wizard and the search engine. But at the world's largest aerospace company, this set of management strategies for planning and executing successful programs has proven essential to improving performance.

The best practices came about after the late-1990s merger of Boeing and McDonnell Douglas, when senior leaders tasked a team to assess high-performing programs and deliver a consistent, one-company approach to managing the company's programs.

"We wanted a set of robust processes that would yield repeatable, predictable results," said Pat Finneran, vice president of Program Management & Business Excellence for Integrated Defense Systems.

That team identified management strategies from several programs—including 747, 777, C-17 Globemaster III, F/A-18 Hornet and Delta II—to be the basis for best practices. Over the past decade, the best practices have been updated annually to reflect new approaches and lessons learned. Today, the eight best practices (see box at right) document 134 attributes and actions that can be applied to programs of all sizes and at each phase of a program's life cycle.

"The best practices give you the abil-

ity to avoid typical problems, deal with difficult situations, drive continuous improvement and generally be more effective," said Lou Mancini, vice president and general manager of Commercial Aviation Services for Commercial Airplanes.

During the past decade, application of the best practices has made good programs better and helped weak ones get stronger. For example, implementing the best practices from day one helped the EA-18G Growler team get off to a flying start and deliver the first airborne electronic attack aircraft to the U.S. Navy ahead of schedule. And the Boeing-led Ground-based Midcourse Defense System team increased its emphasis on the best practices to meet changing and challenging requirements from the U.S. Missile Defense Agency. Accordingly, their performance led to high customer satisfaction and a multiyear, follow-on contract that runs through 2013.

Although they represent the best of Boeing, the best practices offer no guarantee for high performance. "Program management is an art, not a science," said Mancini. "You also need to be a good leader, live the leadership attributes and create a culture in which all members of your team can succeed."

For more information on program management best practices, visit the Boeing Program Management Web site at <https://pm.web.boeing.com> on the Boeing intranet. ■

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Time-tested practices

Here are the eight program-management best practices.

Business Offer: Understand customer, regulatory and other requirements. Prepare executable and profitable proposals and contract changes.

Create and Review Business Plan: Set strategic objectives and measure progress throughout the life of the program.

Organization: Develop a product-based organizational structure with clearly documented team responsibilities.

Supplier Integration: Establish and maintain a collaborative working environment with suppliers from the earliest stage through program end.

Program Execution and Control: Use a formal concept of operations to manage technical, quality, schedule, cost and other activities.

Risk, Issue and Opportunity Management: Use an integrated method to capture opportunities and mitigate or correct risks and issues.

Help Needed and Independent Review: Promote a culture of open communication and continuous improvement.

Program Communication: Develop and maintain strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders.