U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Developing Procurement Talent:
The Story of VA New England

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Network Contracting Office One (NCO 1)

I. Background/Context

    I. What is an NCO?

    II. The VA Operational Reality

II. Development Systems

    I. Operational/Training Focused

    II. Workflow Process

    III. Core Groups

    IV. VA Team Structure

III. Customer Engagement
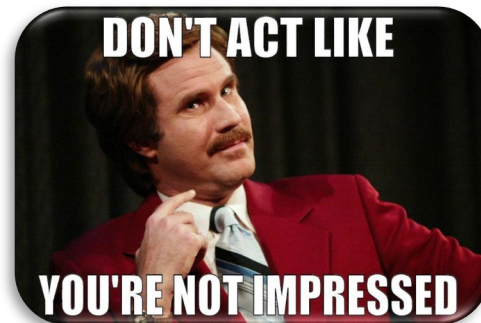
IV. Questions

WHAT IS A NETWORK CONTRACTING OFFICE (NCO)?

Our Customer: VA Integrated Service Network One (VISN 1)

- 8x VA Medical Centers (Boston, West Haven, Manchester, Providence, etc...)
- 40x Community Based Outpatient Clinics or "CBOCs"
- 24x Vet Centers (Mental Health Focused)
- ~3 Billion Operating Budget
- ~2.5 Million Outpatient Visits Annually
- 10,000 Employees

Network Contracting Office (NCO 1)

- 7,000 Contracting Actions Annually
- ~500 Million Obligated Annually
- 5,500 Closeouts Annually
- 5,000 Reviews Annually
- 3,500 Active Contracts
- 150 FTE

- Heavy Workload
  - A VA NCO receives ~30-50 incoming procurement requests (PRs) a day.
  - 3rd quarter is 50-75 a day. ~50% of PR's are not actionable.
  - Average Commercial CS administers 30-50 contracts
- Rapid Turnover
  - Average NCO turnover rate is 15-20% annually
- Development of the "Newb"
  - Takes 2+ Years to grow a functional 1102
  - NCO's must "grow their own" at the GS-5/7/9/11 level
- Broad Mission, Outside "Normal" 1102/FAR Lane:
  - Government Purchase Card Mission (AOPC's, PCPM)
  - Real property leasing (1170/GSA)
  - Medical Affiliate Contracts (Dartmouth, Yale, Maine Med, MGH, Brigham)
  - Prosthetics, Consignment Agreements, Sharing Agreements
- Lower Grades, Antiquated Systems (VISTA), Kingdomware SCOTUS, etc..
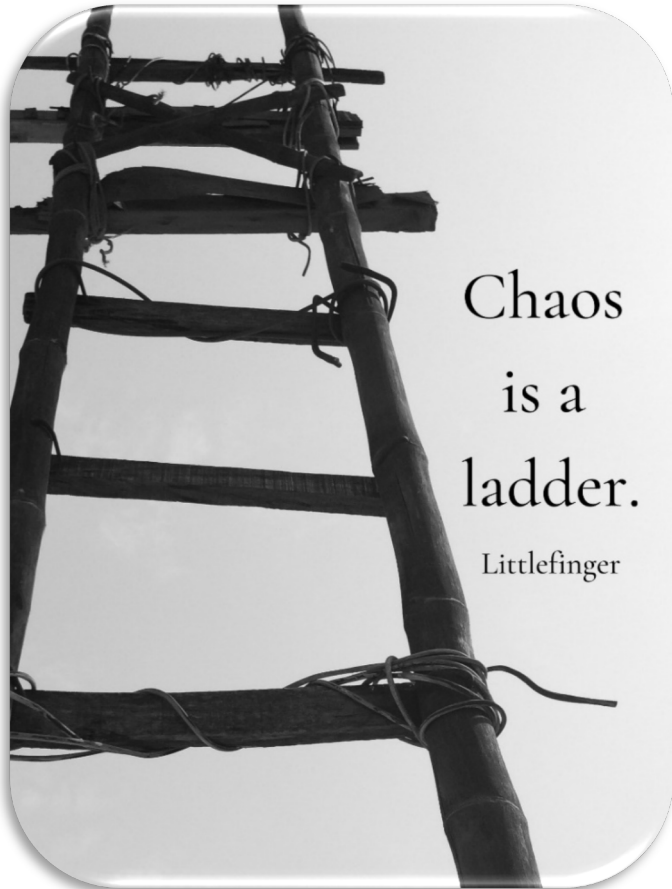 - Journeyman CO is a GS-12 in VA (compared to GS-13), BC = 13, DC = 14

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

PLEASE DISPERSE

Workload + Turnover + Constant Development + Broad Mission =

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Chaos
is a
ladder.

Littlefinger

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

TO CARE FOR HIM WHO SHALL HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE AND FOR HIS WIDOW, AND HIS ORPHAN
A. LINCOLN

1. **Operational Systems:**
   1. Workflow System/PR Process
   2. Core Groups (CS/CO Ownership of One Industry/Customer)
   3. Customer Engagement System

2. **Training Systems or Toolkits:**
   1. VA Acquisition Academy (Free for NCOs to send staff)
   2. VA Procurement Guide (Step by Step)
   3. Training Officers
   4. Robust SOPs/Ois
   5. OJT Tracker /IDPs

1. Again, NCO 1 receives ~30-50 incoming procurement requests a day. If BC's and DC's solely facilitate this process, it can take their whole day.

2. Empower the PT's (1106) to act as <u>gatekeepers</u> and <u>triage</u> incoming work. PT identifies if package is complete, connects ACQ-Plan to PR, sends 2/5/7-day emails if incomplete, etc..

3. Each high-volume team (Commodities, Services) has a dedicated PT whose "day job" is to run this process. PT meets with BC weekly to confirm assignments.

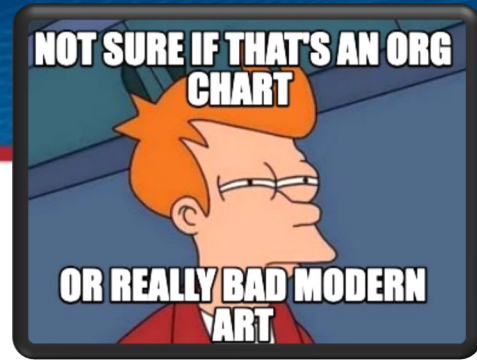4. This allows BC/DC to supervise, conduct reviews/audits, teach/coach/mentor, focus on ER/LR issues, etc…

LOOK AT ALL THIS WORK
I HAVENT DONE YET
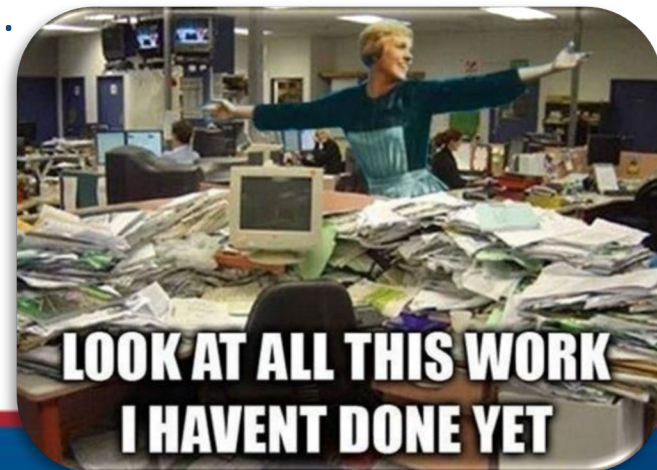
1. Commodities, Services, and Medical Sharing are aligned by specific customer groups. Each customer group has an assigned CO/CS team.
   - Service Examples = Transportation, Clinical Engineering, Facility Maintenance, Professional Services, Consulting, Waste Removal, Janitorial, Pharmacy, etc..
   - Commodity Examples = High Cost High Tech Equipment, Activation Support, Labs, IT, Utilities…
   - Medical Services Examples = Locums, Community Nursing Homes, Affiliates, Surgical Specialties, etc…

2. Goal = Develop actual business advisors. CO's are far savvier in their assigned industry. They understand applicable quality standards for PWS development, and better postured to advise customer.

3. Customer knows who "owns" them. This avoids the contracting "black hole."
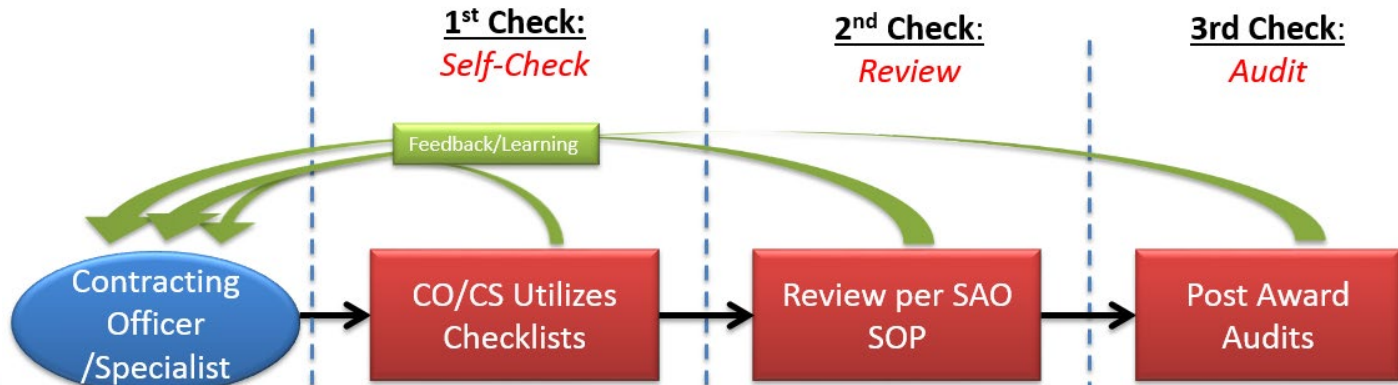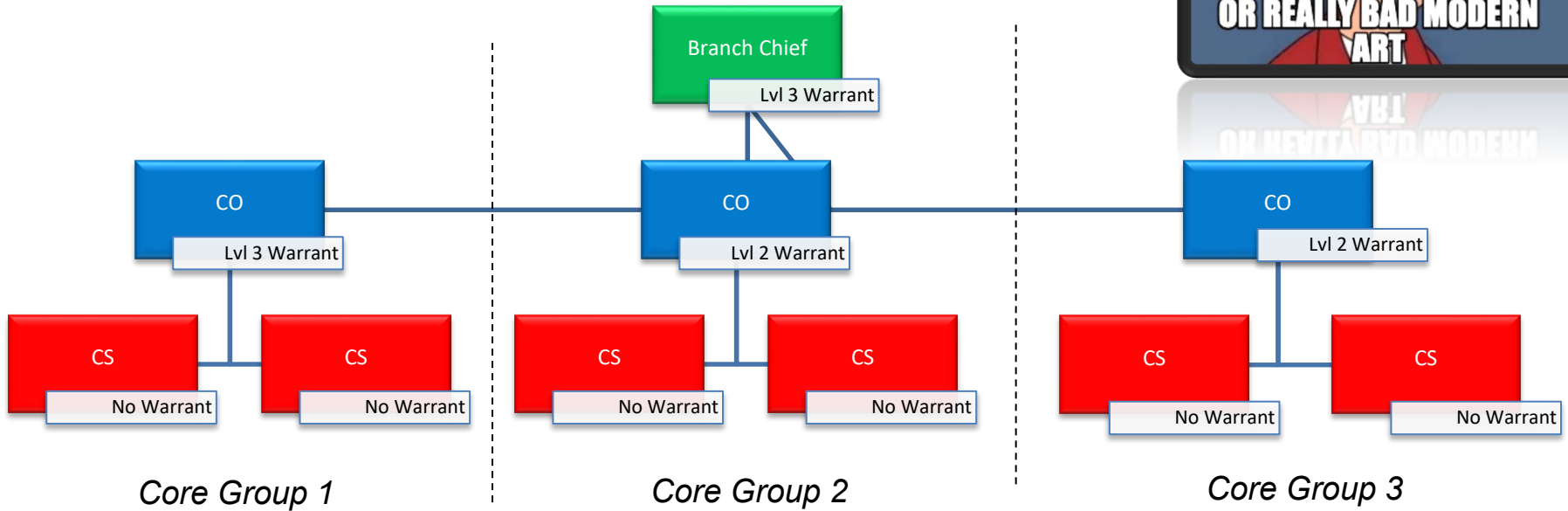
NOT SURE IF THAT'S AN ORG CHART OR REALLY BAD MODERN ART

GS-12 Warrant Holders, PD Supports the Role, Multiple "Leads", Develop the CS

Core Group 1

- CO — Lvl 3 Warrant
  - CS — No Warrant
  - CS — No Warrant

Core Group 2

- Branch Chief — Lvl 3 Warrant
- CO — Lvl 2 Warrant
  - CS — No Warrant
  - CS — No Warrant

Core Group 3

- CO — Lvl 2 Warrant
  - CS — No Warrant
  - CS — No Warrant

Process flow:

Contracting Officer/Specialist → CO/CS Utilizes Checklists → Review per SAO SOP → Post Award Audits

- **1st Check:** *Self-Check*
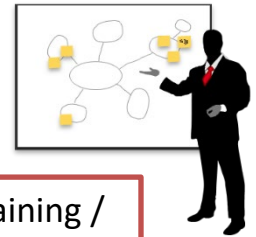- **2nd Check:** *Review*
- **3rd Check:** *Audit*

Feedback/Learning

Three Pronged Approach to Engaging and Helping Customers:

Customer Toolbox

CO Engagement w/ Core Group

COR Training / Local Trainings

What options do I have?

I need help...

**I need training...**
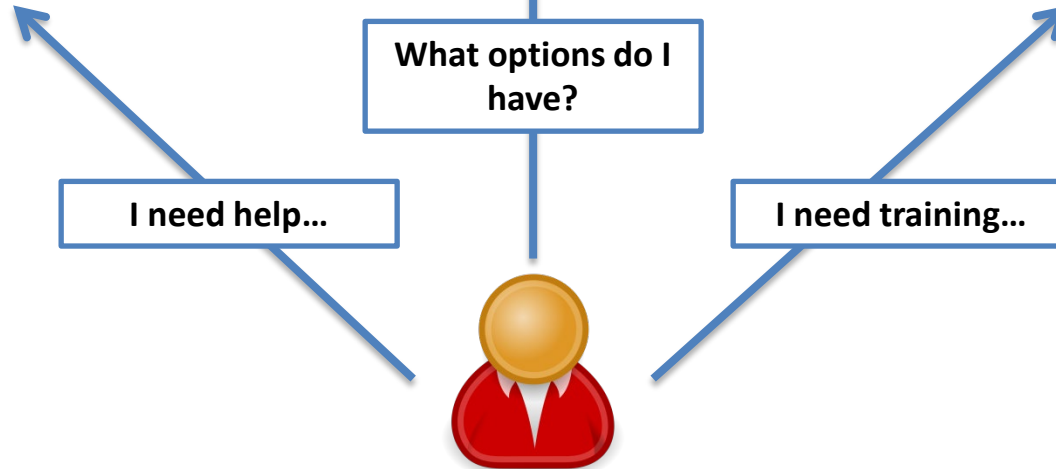
Customer/AO/SME/PM

The goal of the NCO 01 Customer Toolbox is to offer greater transparency and customer service for VISN 1 customers. The toolbox offers numerous features:

- [NCO 01 Customer Toolbox (sharepoint.com)](sharepoint.com)
- Look up any acquisition plan to get status in real time
- Submit an emergency request (no change to current process but will walk you through that).
- Obtain acquisition timeframes based on specific requirements (construction, services, etc..) for planning purposes.
- Step by step instructions for COR's/PM's/AO's/Utilization specialists on how to submit an acquisition plan or procurement request.
- See which CO "owns" specific service lines such as FMS, lab/pathology, transportation, clinical engineering, etc…
- Ratification instructions
- Allows you to join the toolbox in MS Teams as well
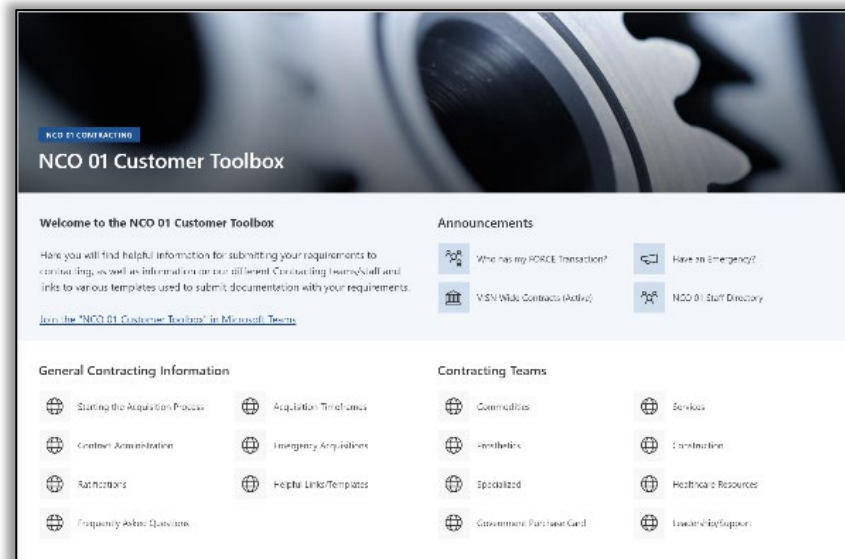
OIT has helped NCO 1 create an icon on everyone's desktop located under the VA Apps shortcut (see below).
- Click on the "VA Apps" icon on your desktop
- Find the contracting toolbox shortcut/icon.
- Drag it to your desktop.
- We welcome and appreciate feedback as well.

Contracting Toolbox
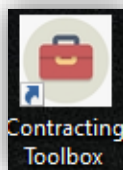
FY 2023 Monthly Training Plan

November- CPARS

December- Closeouts

January- Wage Determination

February- Contractor Responsibility (S20)

March- Termination v. Cancelation

April – Contract Structure

May – Improper Terminology

June - Novation

July - Modifications

August - D & Fs

Classes-
    Appropriations Law
    Emergency (MSPV)(VAAA)
    Simplified Acquisitions
    Fun with the FAR