

Research
Objective

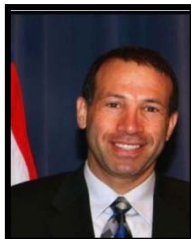
Background

Methodology

Findings

Recommendations
& Conclusion

Experience Catalysts: Understanding How They Can Help Fill the Acquisition Experience Gap for the Department of Defense



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Experience Catalysts: Understanding How They Can Help Fill the Acquisition Experience Gap for the Department of Defense?

By

Robert E. Tremaine

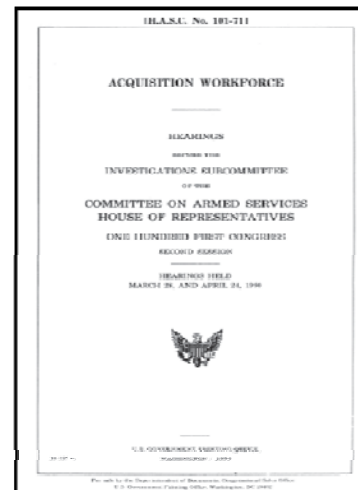
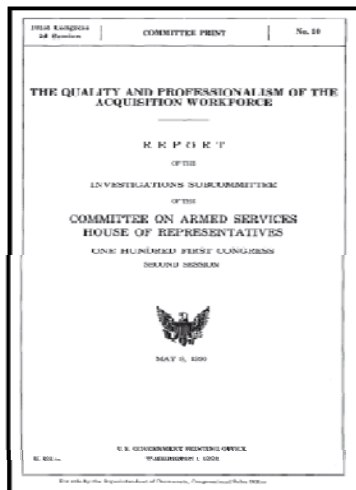
INTRODUCTION

In any business, trade, or profession, experience matters especially when our lives depend on it. Not surprisingly, the public tends to look at experience as an absolute necessity when personal safety is paramount. Professions like the medical, transportation and construction industries rely heavily on experience. They take considerable time to qualify their respective corps through various experience incubators like internships, fellowships, apprentices, etc—all on-the-job means, and for obvious reasons. They learn by "doing." Without "doing" these personnel may face challenges later they can't easily overcome when "know-how" matters the most. As a result and for practical reasons, many of these professions use quantitative measures such as "hours" or "years." They serve as experience markers. It not only gives these trades more confidence—it also gives the public more confidence. After all, tested and demonstrated competencies are a valid security since an experience failure could lead to life-threatening consequences. No one wants to rely solely on fatal experiences to avoid future catastrophes.

Many of these same professions are also backed-up by licensing boards focused on maintaining minimum standards. For example, burgeoning surgeons spend many years practicing their craft under the watchful eye of experienced surgeons before they ever get sanctioned as qualified surgeons. Entry level military and commercial airline pilots must earn a minimum number of successful flight hours under a wide range of operating conditions before they are allowed to climb into the left seat (from the right seat) as qualified pilots-in-command. To make sure they don't become an electrical danger to themselves or anyone else, apprentice electricians require a minimum number of years as apprentices under the close supervision of a senior lineman before they go solo installing or repairing electrical lines. In all these cases, institutions like educational achievement, aptitude, previous job performance, etc. serve as initial career screening mechanisms. However, the existence of a certification or qualification component tightly connected to experience levels seems to be a distinguishing characteristic that makes these particular professions different enough from those without one. Certification also serves as the basis for expected outcomes. But, can experience be accelerated to bolster certification efforts across the range of professions? Are there any innovative methodologies that can appreciably accelerate experience and shrink the time it takes to achieve it? If so, many professionals including Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW) personnel could be the beneficiaries since their certification levels rely heavily on experience (in addition to education and training). Twenty-one years after the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) of 1999 became law, experience shortfalls are still surfacing. If left alone, these experience shortcomings could result in acquisition limitations and delay the fielding of essential systems that warfighters need. It's time to take another look at the experience variables that are extremely important in the acquisition workplace performance equation. What matters and what doesn't?

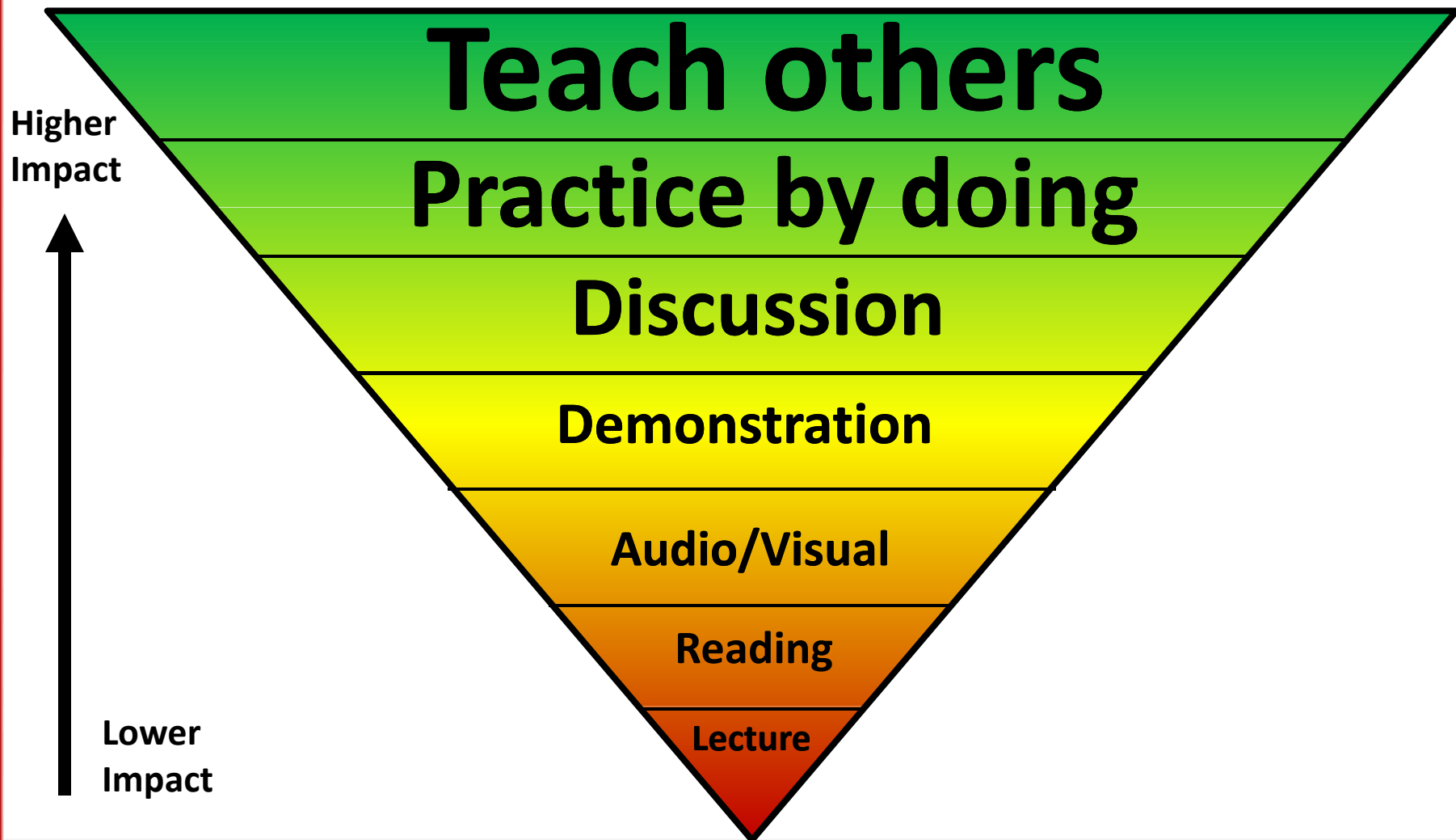
The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) Recognized the Importance of Experience:

Certification = Education + Experience + Training



FY 1991 National Defense Authorization Act

How do we Grow experience?



Where Does the Learning Take Place?

Informal/Incidental

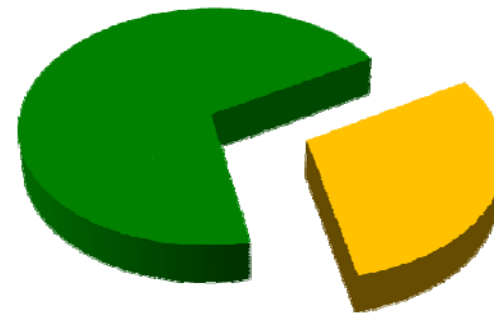
Degree which the learner has control of both the objective and the means.

Formal

Degree which the institution has control of both the objective and the means.

70% of learning takes place *on-the-job* (and not in a class)¹


Informal/Incidental = 70%



Formal = 30%

¹"Learning in the Workplace," Marsick and Watkins, 1990.

DAWIA and the Price of Professionalism by Keith Snider (1996)

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... I offer two possible visions of the state of the acquisition workforce in 25 years:

- Disconnected groups of specialists, each narrowly focused on their own particular piece of the acquisition puzzle, or
- A workforce that takes the broad view, bringing together diverse skills and perspectives to determine how best to fit together all the pieces of the puzzle

What is an *Experience Catalyst*?



What is an *Experience Catalyst*?

Practice

Social interaction

Experimentation

Knowledge

Dialogue

Mentorship

Technology

Coaching

Teaching

Observation

Policy

Processes

Guidebooks

$$Experience = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4 \dots x_n)$$

Experience Factors

Many Affect the Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW)

X₁

Existing Workforce Capabilities

X₂

Gaps in Critical Skills & Competencies

X₃

Training Methods & Availability

X₄

Congressional Direction

X₅

Strategic Guidance & Plans

X₆

Implementation Methodology, Policy, Processes, & Procedures

X₇

Available Funding

FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17
\$?	\$?	\$?	\$?	\$?	\$?

X₈

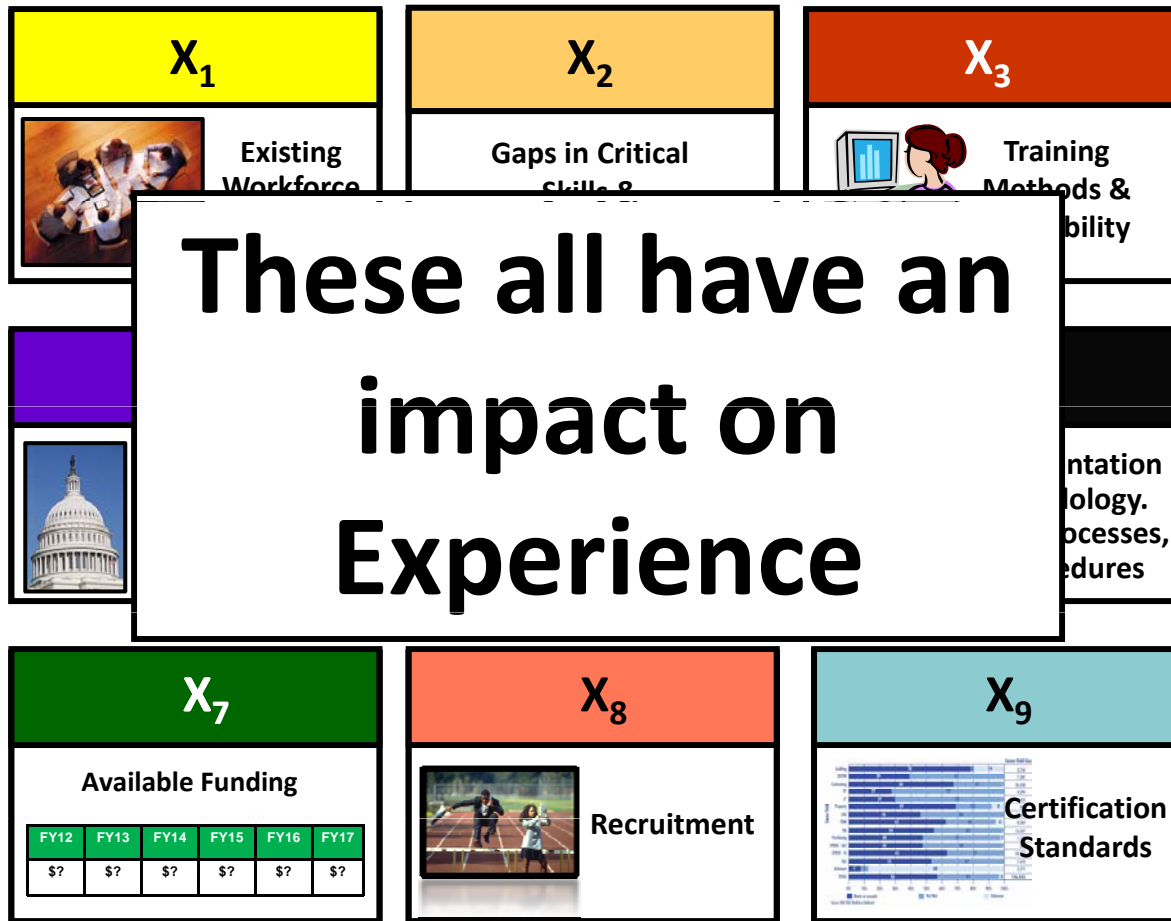
Recruitment

X₉

Certification Standards

$$Experience = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4 \dots x_n)$$

Experience Factors					
Many Affect the Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW)					



Methodology



Literature
Review

... What's the Academic Community
have to say about *Experience*?

+



Focus
Groups

... What's the relevancy
of this research?

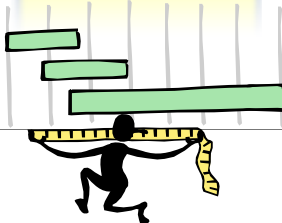
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Experience
Survey

... What's the field have to say
about *Experience Catalysts*?

+



Data
Analysis

Recommendations
& Conclusions





Experience Catalysts (EC)



$$EC = \sum_{i=1}^n (\text{Tier } 1_i + \text{Tier } 2_i + \text{Tier } 3_i) - \text{Barriers}_i$$



Tier 1: Foundational

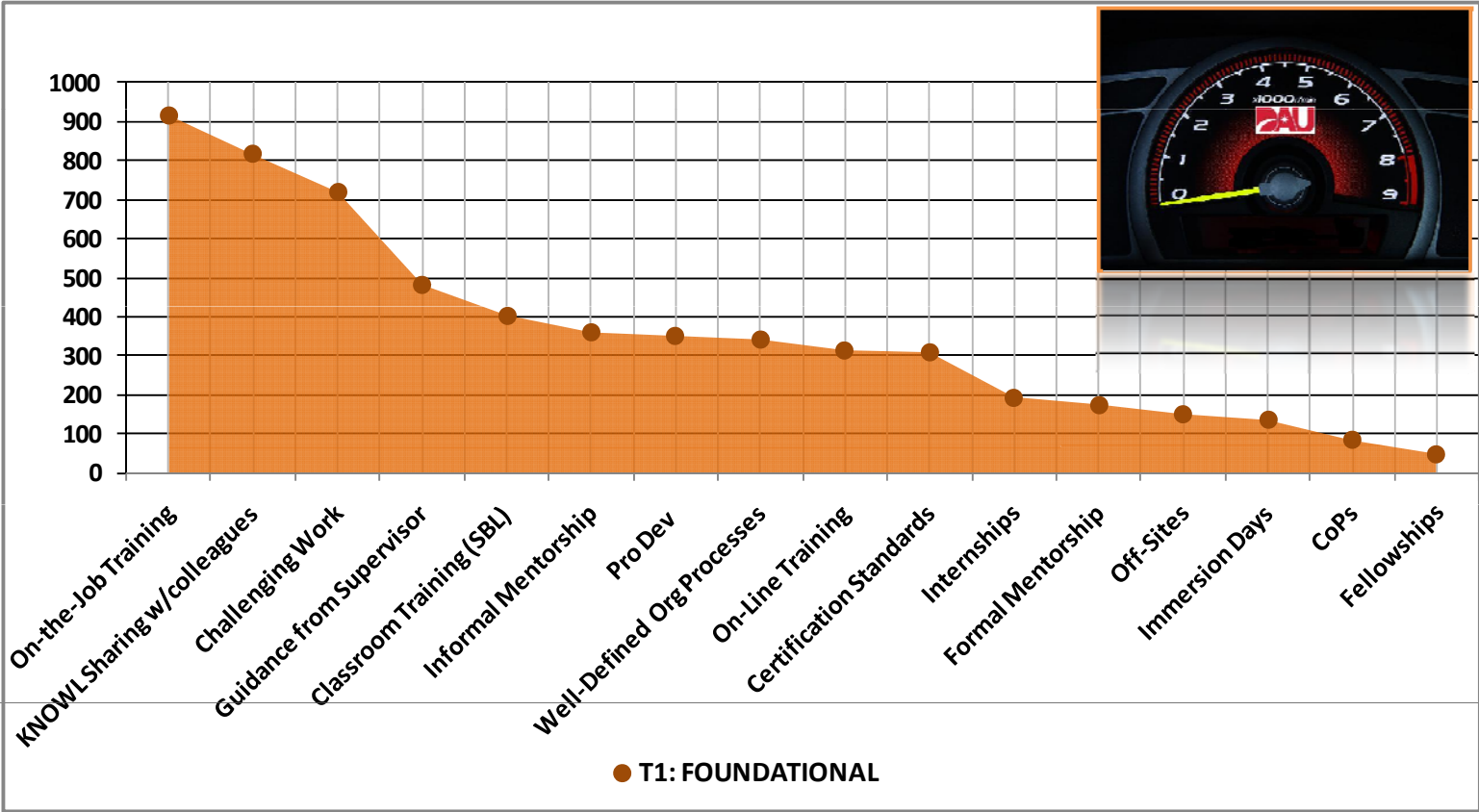


Tier 2: Enhancers

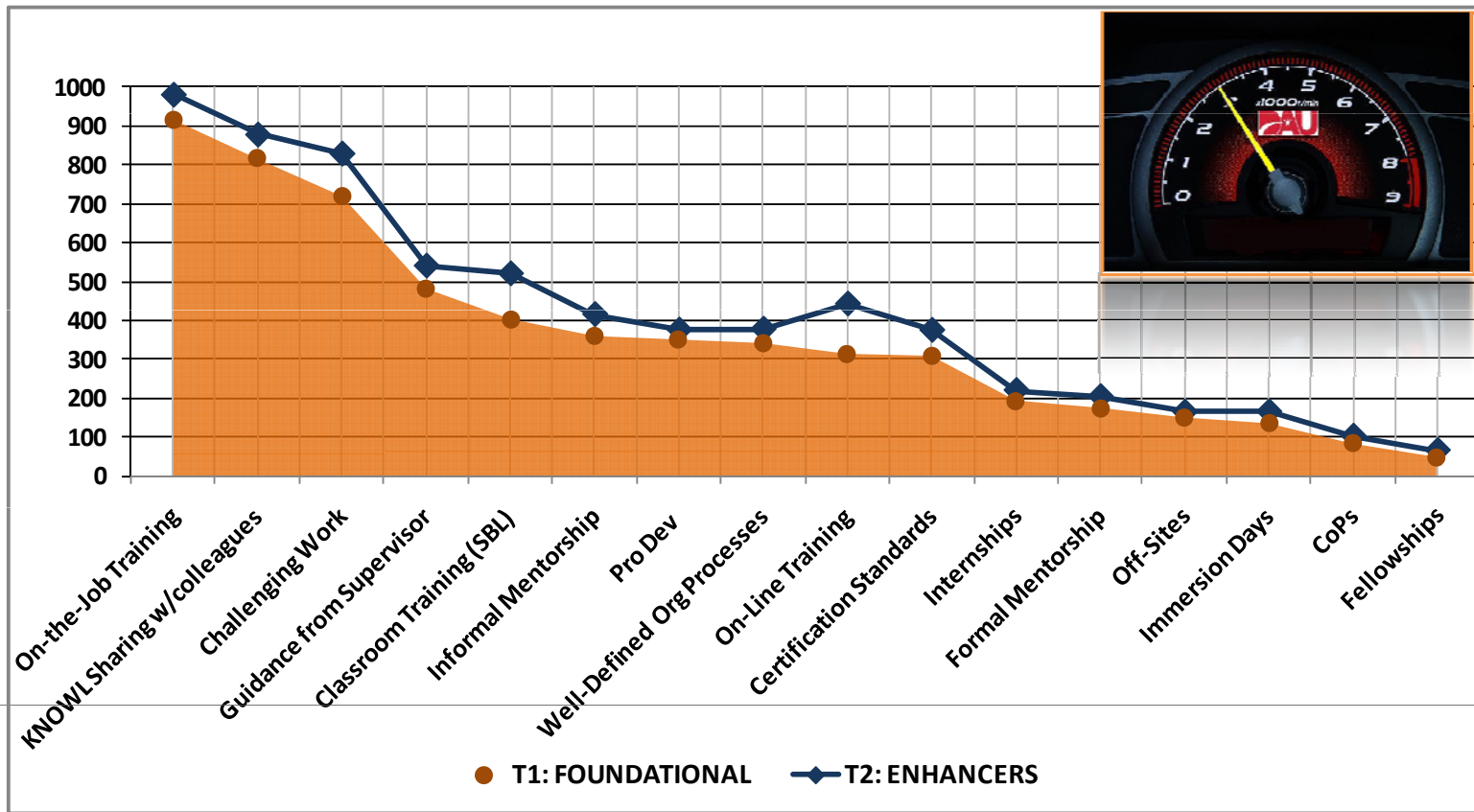


Tier 3: Accelerators

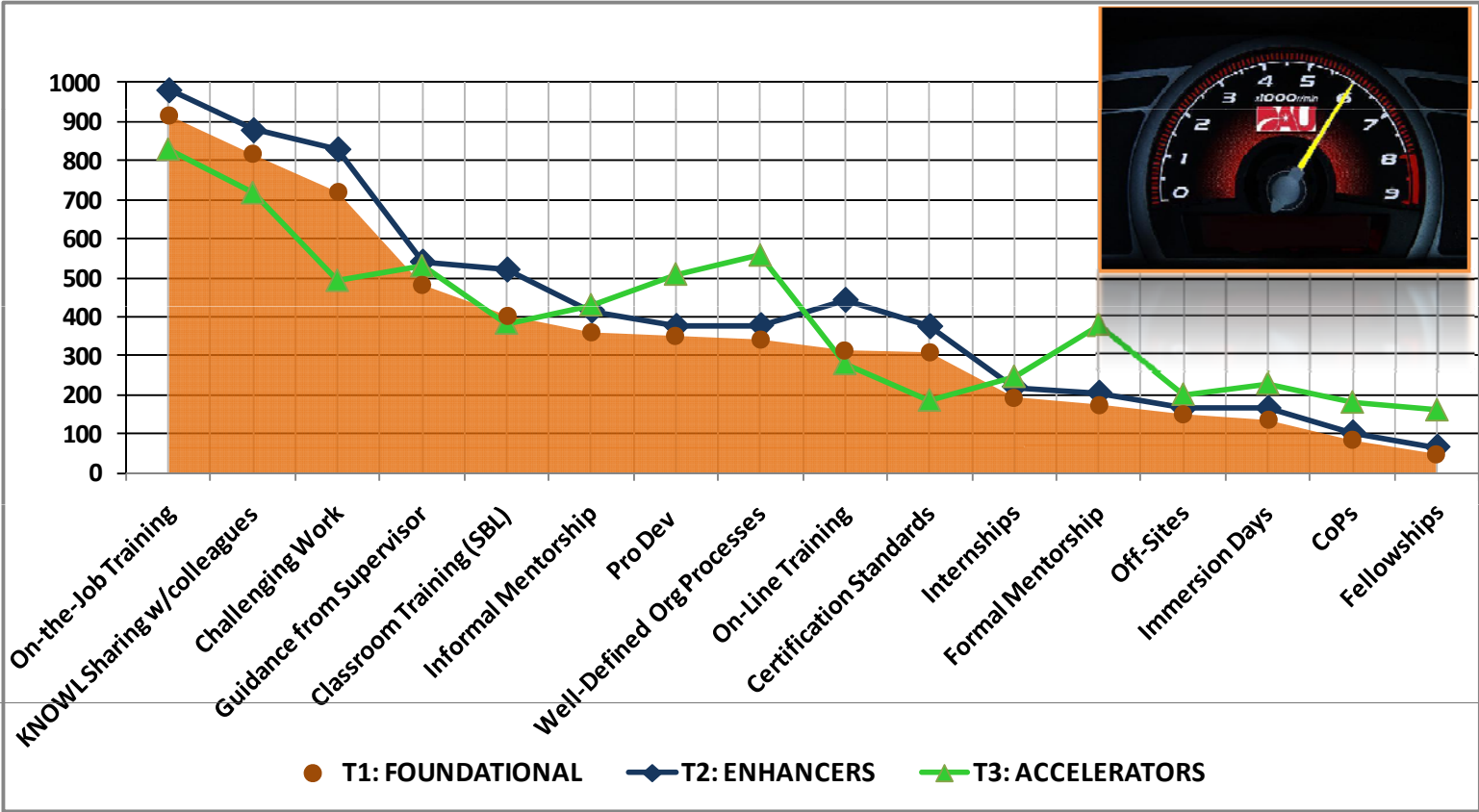
T1: Foundational



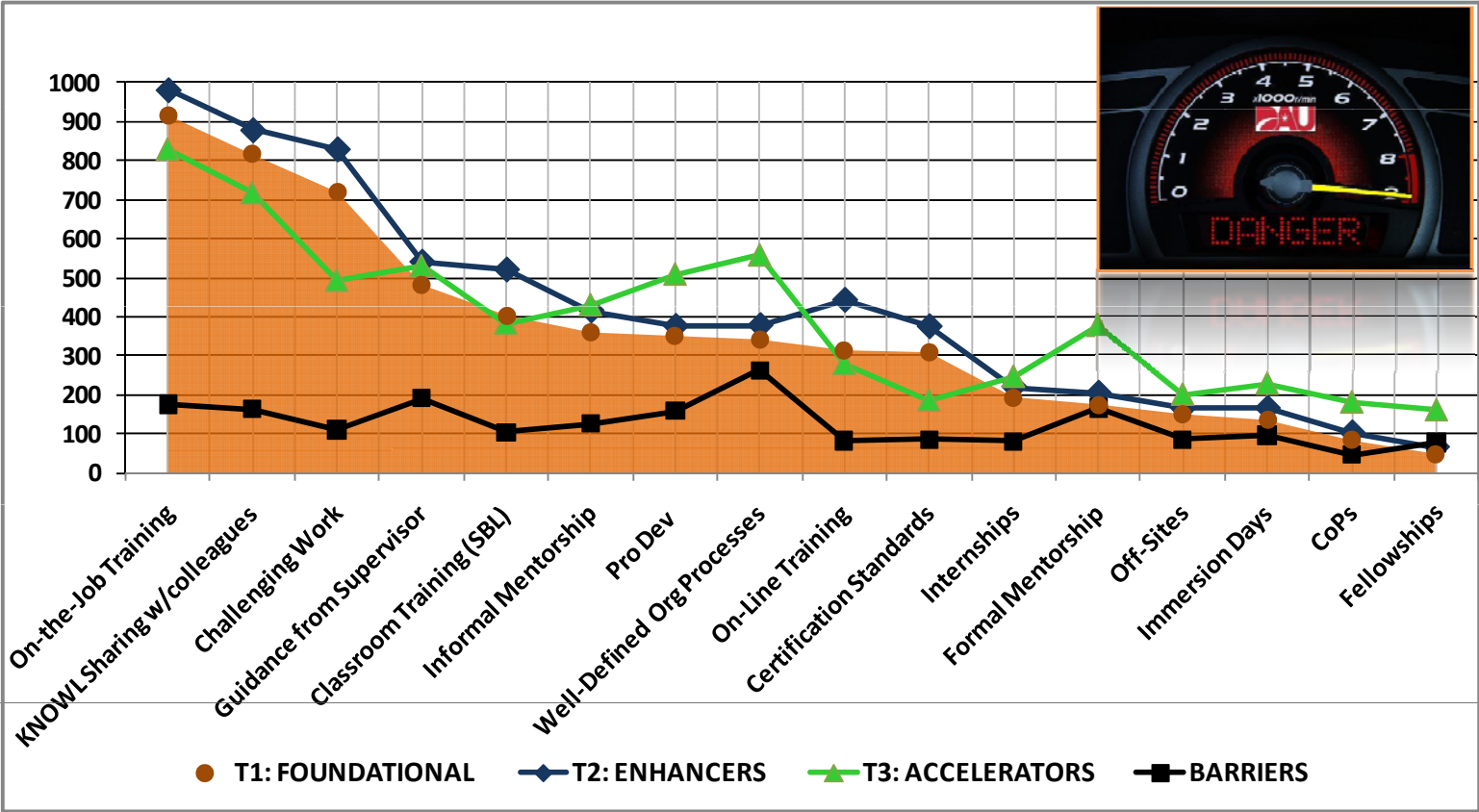
T1(Foundational), T2 (Enhancers)



T1(Foundational), T2 (Enhancers), T3 (Accelerators)

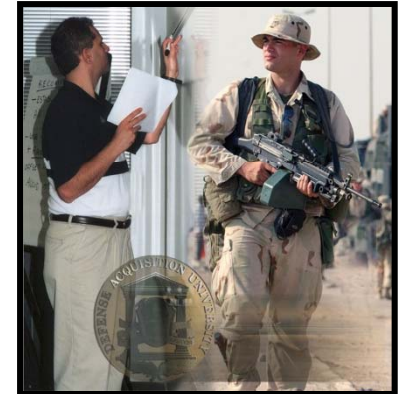


T1(Foundational), T2 (Enhancers), T3 (Accelerators), Barriers



Recommendations for Acquisition Business Units

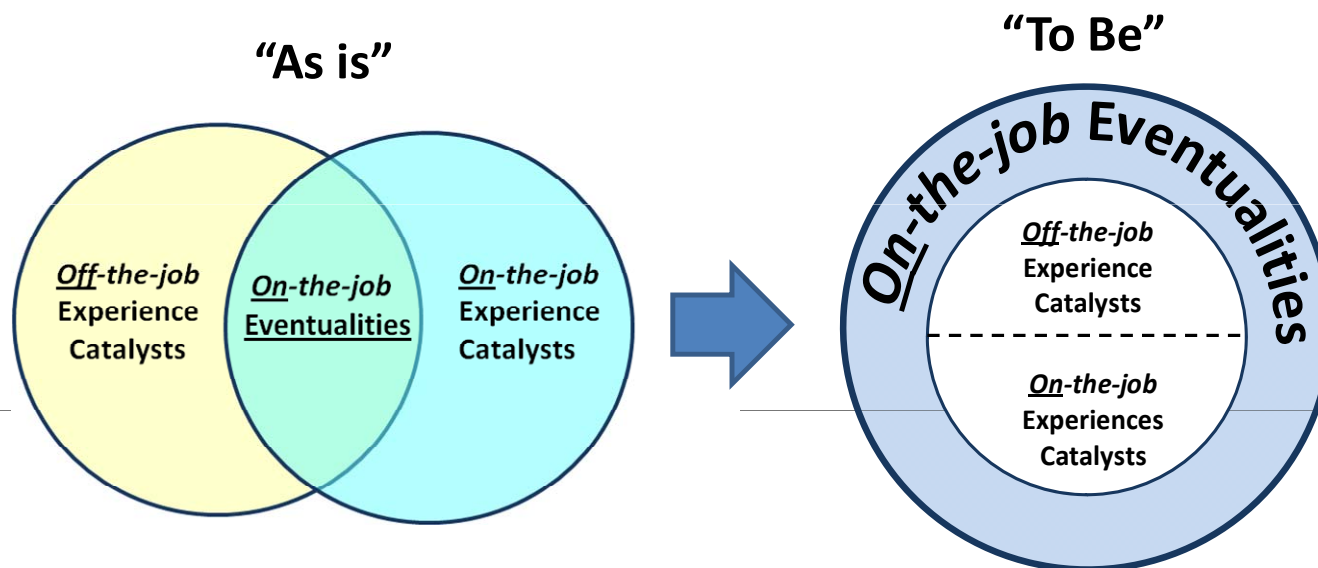
- Codify yourselves as **Learning Organizations**
- Keep the work **challenging** and in perspective
- Capitalize and promote **Knowledge Sharing**
- Get **supervisors** involved in the training process before and after the event
- Clearly articulate and punctuate the effectiveness of organizational **processes**
- Promote and support **professional development**
- Promote **mentorship**
- Recognize the efficacy of **DAWIA** training
- Explore benefits of **Immersion Days** and **Off-sites**
- Leverage **social media**



Recommendations for Acquisition Training Units



- Continue to tighten the connection between off-the job training and on-the-job training



Recommendations for Acquisition Training Units



- Maximize **Scenario Based Learning**
- Reinforce the benefits of **certification** standards
- Monitor and exploit the usefulness of all **Knowledge Sharing** mediums including **social media**

Experience is the name every one gives to their mistakes” (Oscar Wilde, 1892)



- The DoD’s acquisition workforce needs the *time to practice* just like any other profession and can least afford any experience shortfall that results in weapon system delays for warfighters serving in harm’s way.
- Warfighters depend on the DAW to get it right the first time