Chapter 5.32
Challenges in Developing a Knowledge Management Strategy for the Air Force Material Command

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is widely acknowledged that an organizational knowledge management strategy is a desired precursor to the development of specific knowledge management (KM) initiatives. The development of such a strategy is often difficult in the face of a lack of organizational understanding about KM and other organizational constraints. This case study describes the issues involved in developing a new KM strategy for the Air Force Material Command (AFMC). It centers around the AFMC KM program manager, Randy Adkins, and his challenges in developing the future KM strategy direction for the AFMC enterprise. The case study begins with a description of the history of the AFMC KM program and the existing KM system, but then focuses primarily on issues to be considered in future strategy development, such as maintaining top leadership support and understanding, conflict with the IT organization, funding cuts, future KM system configuration needs, and outsourcing of KM. The intent of this case study is to demonstrate, using Randy Adkins and AFMC as an example, many common issues that can be encountered as leaders struggle to develop viable KM strategies.

BACKGROUND

The Air Force Material Command

The Air Force Material Command (AFMC) is one of the Air Force's nine major commands (Figure 1). It is headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, and employs 85,000 military and civilian employees across the globe. The primary mission of AFMC is to "develop, acquire, and sustain the aerospace power needed to defend the United States and its interests . . . today and tomorrow" (HQ AFMC PA, 2001a). As such, it has cradle-to-grave oversight for the Air Force's aircraft, missiles, and munitions (HQ AFMC PA, 2001a). Key mission essential tasks

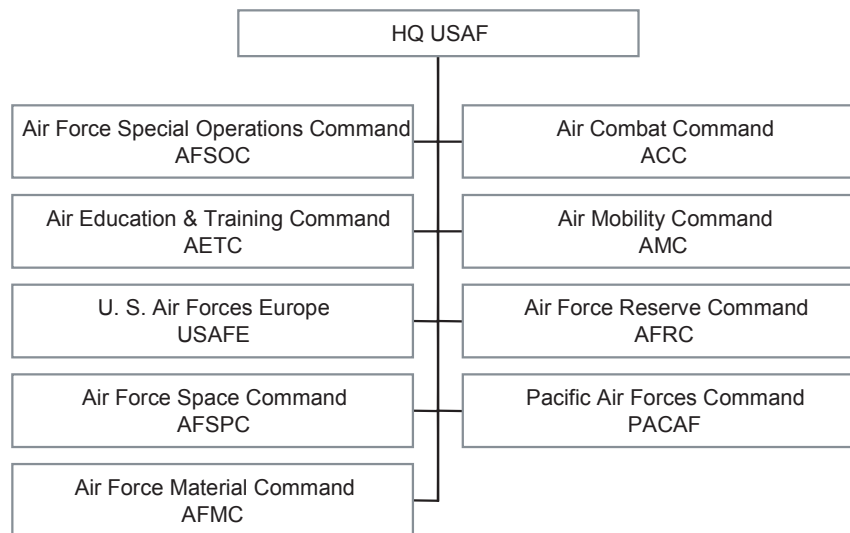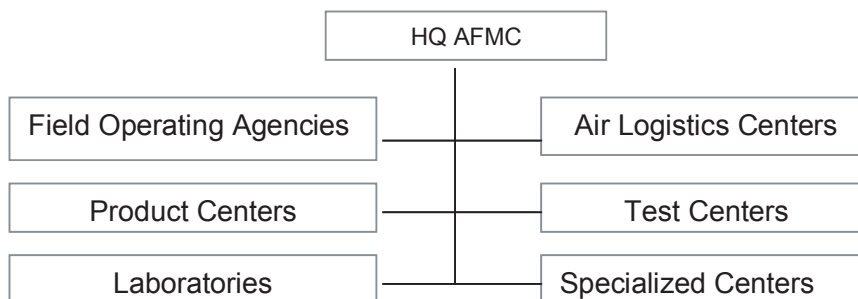*Figure 1. U.S. Air Force major commands*

Figure 2. Air Force Material Command organization

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