

DeCA Store Operations Group Executive Director Keith Hagenbuch, SES

Driving Consistencies And Efficiencies Toward a 'CLASS' Agency



Since taking over as Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) Store Operations Group executive director, Keith Hagenbuch has been tasked with refining store operations system-wide as part of the agency's transformation into what it calls the Commissary Benefit 2020.

No other initiative has been more expansive or arduous, perhaps, than Commissary Levels of Authorized Standardized Services (CLASS), which was implemented and deployed by Hagenbuch's group with the collaborative efforts of multiple DeCA branches and divisions.

In this exclusive interview with Exchange and Commissary News, Hagenbuch talks about his goal of full deployment of the CLASS concept across all 247 commissaries, transformational change, sharing best practices, and identifying potential opportunities to improve, as well as other efforts and initiatives to drive efficiencies in the ways DeCA does business.

E&C News: *Whether it's the work of your people and team, DeCA-wide collaboration, or a specific challenging initiative, what are you most excited about in terms of the accomplishments of the new Store Operations Group since its establishment?*

Hagenbuch: Deploying Commissary Levels of Authorized Standardized Services (CLASS) has proven to be one of the most ambitious initiatives in scope and most successful accomplishments I can point to, since the new Store Operations Group was established. Its success, however, has also proven to be one of the most

collaborative endeavors in agency history.

DeCA's Store Operations Group — at all levels — as well as Information Technology (IT), Human Resources (HR), Resource Management (RM) and the agency's leadership have all played vital roles in making this massive undertaking the success it is today. Our stores have embraced the new consistencies in processes, and the new internal social media communication forum, "Communities of Practice," has provided our stores unprecedented capability to share best practices as well as identify potential opportunities to improve.

What do you feel DeCA's 2012 reorganization has done to facilitate closer work among operations, logistics and sales?

It's been my experience that transformational change triggers comprehensive changes in previously established networks and relationships, and as new networks and relationships are formed, the newly forged coalitions result in stronger, more efficient realignments of relationships and resources. DeCA's 2012 reorganization reflects that experience. As a result of the reorganization, operations, logistics and sales are far closer today to a "One DeCA" way of conducting business than at any other point in the agency's history.

Are there any other new efficiencies that you expect to deploy in fiscal 2013 that you can tell us about?

Standardization and centralization of fresh pork and beef, using a single hub store and supplier in a zone-by-zone model, is currently one of the most exciting initiatives we are reviewing for possible deployment. This important initiative will give the agency the ability to structure the most uniform accountability processes and platforms for each store in a zone.

Fresh pork contracts for stores in CONUS are also

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DeCA Operations Q&A

part of the standardization process, allowing us to tailor pork product selections in individual stores to reflect the tastes and buying habits of local and regional customers, while maintaining critical processing consistencies.

What was your group's involvement in implementing CLASS and where does it currently stand?

Store Operations had the lead since the genesis of the CLASS concept, and we have played a major role in its implementation and deployment — first from a corporate headquarters perspective and then from a field perspective as the deployment rolled out. Coordination and collaboration were hallmarks of the process from the beginning, as we all engaged and invested in what proved to be a truly enterprise-based process throughout the development and definition phase. The

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DeCA Store Operations Group Executive Director Keith Hagenbuch (right) and DeCA Principal Deputy Director, Store Operations, Jay Hudson, together with teams and executives from Store Operations and the entire DeCA enterprise, continue to implement Commissary Levels of Authorized Standardized Services (CLASS).

deployment phase — started in April of last year — has also proven to be highly collaborative with the Store Operations Group working in highly cohesive teams with representatives from HR, IT and RM.

The concepts of CLASS are not new in the corporate world — consistency in processes and quality drive efficiencies in doing business, while ensuring that employees, customers and leadership all have a defined understanding of a given brand. With the introduction of CLASS, DeCA actually embraced a long-standing and truly corporate culture by defining and then driving consistencies in its day-to-day operational processes. There is simply not a successful corporate entity out there that hasn't already done exactly that to ensure it survives in today's economic and political markets.

Are there any other ways you feel the Store Operations Group is improving some of the "little details that count" at store level for managers, staff and patrons?

This is an exciting time to be part of Store Operations — regardless of whether your "chair" resides in a store, a zone, an area or in the Fort Lee, Va., headquarters element of Store Ops. CLASS, Job Aids — the visual aids that break down each process and task into simple to understand steps — and Communities of Practice, have eliminated redundancies, driven unprecedented levels of consistency and efficiencies, and truly polished and refined each and every task we perform at store level.

As we move up the chain from the stores to my office, we have discovered that CLASS has delivered on its promise to ensure that not only will our customers know what to expect and our employees understand what is expected from them, but that the agency's leadership will now have an unprecedented knowledge of exactly what levels of service are expected of and provided by each of the 247 commissaries.

Please tell us a little about your executive teams both at headquarters and in the areas, and the group's "24/7" executive overview of all stores and areas.

In the context of "One DeCA," the 24/7 executive overview and support for all stores and areas has become a unified reality. In the past, it was possible to have different interpretations of the agency's vision — that's no longer a reality. Under "One DeCA," we have been able to develop and then execute a far more unified performance of the agency's vision than ever before. We also are following up on that execution by measuring performance — asking and then defining "why."

With the old region system of oversight unified under a single executive director and supervising area directors, every store around the world has come to understand a single vision and what it will take each of them to execute that vision. We have become a corporate culture that understands the value that consistency brings to performance!

Looking out a little further on the horizon, if there is one thing on your wish list that you would most like to see happen in or with DeCA, what would that be?

I would like to complete full deployment of CLASS; of the 247 stores in DeCA, we have only 80 stores left to deploy. Once we have completely deployed CLASS, we will have effectively deployed 100-percent consistency in our operational processes and tasks. Together — we will make it happen!

—E and C NEWS