

Fall 2011

Shaping Logistics

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Recommended Citation

Reno, Loren M., "Shaping Logistics" (2011). *Business Administration Faculty Publications*. 25.
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FROM THE E-RING

Shaping Logistics

I expect this might be my final article in the Exceptional Release written from my current position on the E-ring of the Pentagon. My thoughts this morning track nicely with the theme for this edition. Let me share some of them with you.

First, if logistics are essential to war-winning, and I think they are, we optimize as we shape them to the requirement. More isn't necessarily better...you've heard the buggy whip analogy. Sooner isn't necessarily good if follow-on transportation isn't ready. Cheaper isn't desired without a long view, i.e., a life cycle approach.

Second, for a supplier to properly shape, a customer/Warfighter has to define. The success of the former depends on the accuracy of the latter. I can't think of a logistics discipline where this isn't true. It covers transportation, supply, maintenance and logistics plans to be sure. It starts with the one in need, it depends on good communication, and it ends with delivery and use. I say "and use" because the right parts stored in a warehouse far away or near to the need don't do the maintainer, or ultimately the operator, much good until installed.

Third, there is a fiscal piece to shaping logistics. The reality of warfare is constraints. There are others, like surprises, but let me write about constraints here. We find ourselves in a time when I don't expect military spending to grow with the appetite some have for more—more capability, more numbers of a given MDS, more support/sustainment, more spare parts, more, more, more. I see the cost for sustainment growing faster than our ability to fund support. We need to make efficiency and reduced cost, as much of our thought process as going to the DFAC is when we're hungry.

If we're willing to do things differently, we can shape logistics with what we have. Not more with less, but more with the same or the same with less. I spoke about this last year at the LOA National Conference. Contractors who provide logistics support need to understand and perform to a standard where they reduce the cost for the same or even better performance over time. Within the Air Force, we need to do the same. This brings me to my last point.

Fourth, it's leading and serving. There are times when we are the supported one and other times when we are supporting...to use the Joint terms. As logistics officers, civilians and contractors, we have to know the difference and make the adjustment. A good knowledge of the other's view is helpful, and it's better pushed than pulled. Important skills are communicating, not inflating, being timely, being dependable, building teams, sharing credit, always learning, and communicating (listed twice on purpose!). I have found that even when leading, I was also serving. If you're not doing both, you're probably not doing all you should.

You'll read about other elements involved in shaping logistics in this edition. But we have to shape logistics—that's my view.

Lt Gen Loren Reno

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Lt Gen Loren Reno

Sir-

Thank you for your leadership, guidance and support through the years. We know this is not "Goodbye"—just "See You Later!" Good luck in your future endeavors.

-The Men and Women of LOA