

Sometimes we write a blog article and put it out there, and we know almost right away it's a grand slam. The article hit count takes off, and the e-mails come in. Once in a while, the phone rings and somebody wants to argue a point. In one instance, a Fed-Ex package arrived with a letter in it, written by the investor relations lead of a corporation we had taken to task. On those days, we feel good. Love us or hate us: at least we know somebody is reading these posts and that we struck a nerve.

Sometimes we don't publish any articles for a couple of days, and we get a few e-mails asking if we're okay, encouraging us to keep putting finger to keyboard. And those feel pretty good, as well.

But sometimes we write a blog article and put it out there ... and nothing happens. Sure, the hit counts rise—slowly, as would be expected simply from the length of time the post has been on the internet—but there's no other sign that we did good. There's simply no feedback, none at all. And on those days, we wonder why we bother.

Such was the case with [our article](#) on Better Buying Power 2.0. Indeed, most of our articles on the initiative to increase efficiency and affordability of the Defense Department have dropped into the pond with scarcely any ripples, despite our attempts to be all provocative and edgy, like pointing out how BBP 2.0 targeted two areas near to our heart—the competency of DCMA acquisition personnel and the backlog of audits at DCAA. Even when we assert—as [we have](#)—that the primary output of the BBP initiative is the creation of more bureaucracy, we don't seem to be striking the right nerves.

Perhaps it's simply because the DOD Leadership doesn't read our blog?

Even so, it's nice when somebody else seems to agree with some of our intentionally provocative and edgy assertions. Such as when J. David Patterson, Director of the [National Defense Business Institute](#) at the University of Tennessee, writes an op-ed piece in the November 26, 2012, edition of Aviation Week that tells readers that the people charged with implementing BBP activities are bureaucrats themselves. Thus: "People within bureaucracies perpetuate self-sustaining behaviors despite the benefits of refining processes." In other words, major process

improvements, such as BBP, do not result in reduced bureaucracy. Quite the opposite is, in fact, true. Major process improvements just result in more bureaucracy, because the bureaucrats seeking to implement the process improvements simply can't help themselves.

We wish we could give you a link to Mr. Patterson's piece—entitled “Fix Bureaucratic Behaviors First”—but we can't, because of copyright restrictions. But suffice to say, Mr. Patterson pointed out that the primary output from the original BBP initiative was the addition of “16 tasks and reports.” Similarly, he pointed out that the BBP 2.0 memo “institutes new processes while not detailing procedures, reports or reviews to be eliminated.” He concluded that, despite the lofty objectives of BBP, “the processes are addictive.”

According to Mr. Patterson, this is the expected outcome. Looking at the history of acquisition reform, he concluded that it is the “cultural behaviors” of the Pentagon bureaucracy that has “impede[d] progress in improving the acquisition system.” When the bureaucrats are invited to implement new processes or refine existing processes, so as to increase efficiency—they simply can't do it. The historical result of such improvement attempts has been almost the exact opposite of the intended objectives. He asserted that “Suborning people to processes results in the least-productive bureaucratic behaviors.”

If one wishes to truly streamline the existing processes and to reduce the existing bureaucracy, then one must first address the cultural issues, according to Mr. Patterson. He wrote, “Acquisition community leadership must address workforce behaviors to achieve concrete, productive reform in how the Defense Department buys weapons, equipment and services.”

If this is not done, “the defense acquisition system will not improve.”

To which we can only add—Amen, brother.