



Joint Personnel Administration utilises COTS technology to the full

For many MoD departments, the use of COTS products and technology is becoming more and more popular. MoD DCB talks to Lt Col Nigel Lewis about the Joint Personnel Administration's decision to choose COTS and how it will benefit the Armed Forces.

The Armed Forces personnel strategy is committed to harmonising and simplifying personnel administrative functions across the Services. This strategy has required a fundamental review of the processes employed and the delivery method. The review revealed that our current systems are old, inflexible, unresponsive and expensive to maintain and inadequate to support operations as effectively as they should. The administrative processes linked to these systems are equally old and largely paper-based, as well as being different in each of the three Services. The Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency (AFPAA) supports the UK defence capability through the accurate payment of military personnel, provision of quality personnel administration and harmonised information services. Since 1998 it has done this through a partnering contract with EDS Defence Ltd. This partnership is not just a simple customer-supplier relationship; EDS is an integral part of the Agency and currently provides 1400 of the Agency's 1950 staff.

In late 2000 a Strategy Study was undertaken to examine ways to modernise the Services personnel and pay administration by exploiting

the advantages of modern commercial software; the requirement was to deliver the solution on a tri-Service basis. In 2004 a massive and complex contract change (worth some £250 million) was agreed for EDS to deliver the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system – the heart of one of the MoD's top defence modernisation programmes. The application chosen for the Services personnel administration is a COTS product, Oracle Human Resource Management System (Oracle HRMS). The COTS Oracle HRMS package meets most of the Services' needs but customisation is being undertaken by EDS to meet specific Service requirements such as rank recognition, promotion boarding and specialist allowances, etc. JPA will, in conjunction with the Defence Information Infrastructure (DII), provide personnel administration to all Service personnel whether in barracks or deployed. JPA will be delivered to each Service in turn throughout 2006.

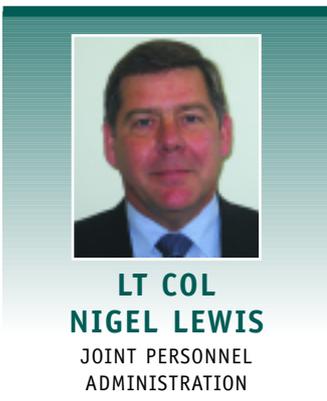
■ WHAT IS ORACLE HRMS?

The underlying principle of Oracle HRMS is that all applications use a common information store and share the same tables within the Oracle database. This reduces the possibility of having conflicting data in different databases and creates a consistent, complete and reliable set of details for every service person, something the Services are unable to do at present. Oracle HRMS allows an organisation to define its own

human resource model to reflect its structures and policies. Once constructed the information model allows the recording of personal, job and pay information for all the employees of that organisation. To achieve this Oracle closely integrates two applications, Oracle HR and Oracle Payroll, under a single menu structure, sharing windows and underlying tables in order to eliminate the need to enter, maintain and store data in more than one location. Critically the entry and maintenance of this data can be undertaken by the individual who knows it best – the employee or, in the case of the Armed Forces, the service person. Within any organisation there is a requirement to manage change effectively and this is particularly true in an organisation as dynamic as the Armed Forces. Oracle HRMS allows changes to be made to parts of an organisation without having to redefine the whole organisation.

■ ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT

Within Oracle HRMS the organisation management functionality has various components that build up to complete the organisation. Firstly there are employee locations that will be linked to their parent organisations, which may be internal or external. In the case of internal organisations these may be units, stations, departments or sections, etc. The external organisations will be groups outside the Armed Forces such as contractors and other government agencies, eg the tax office. Within



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the management structure there is an ability to create organisational hierarchies to show reporting lines and other relationships such as reporting or security hierarchies allowing matrix management to be undertaken. The ability to change hierarchies to reflect simple changes in reporting lines will exist down to unit level and will be a task for application administrators.

■ WORKFLOW

Within Oracle HRMS users of predefined or template forms can use workflow to notify other users of changes or actions required. Some notification messages are standard and others can be created using tools provided within the application. Workflow will ensure that audit procedures for self-service allowances are maintained and that individuals are informed as to progress of items such as queries, absence requests and appraisal reports. Clearly some workflow processes will need to be amended due to absence of key staff or changes of appointments; again, these are tasks that application administrators will be able to complete at unit level and above.

■ REPORTS

One of the key advantages of Oracle HRMS is that a central store of high-quality data is maintained that can be accessed in order to provide managers and administrators with the information they need. The application includes some inquiry windows to meet the most common online reporting requirements. Typically the system will allow entry of a selection criterion into a data field; the system will then search the database and generate a report that lists people, assignments or other items that meet the designated criteria. There will also be a number of predefined reports that can be used immediately without any set-up requirements being met. At the top end of the capability there exists the ability to create unique reports using various tools such as 'query by example'; these reports can then be distributed to all users.

■ TYPES OF USER

Oracle HRMS will be available to approximately 300,000 Regular and Reserve service personnel all of whom will have Employee Self Service access permissions and will

be able to view and update their own personal data and submit specified claims and requests. All those service personnel with line manager/command responsibilities will also have access to information about those for whom they hold responsibility; this group will also include those MoD civil servants who are line managers to service personnel. The line managers will be referred to as Self Service Managers. Human Resource Administrators will be the generic grouping that encompasses those individuals that currently work within the Service administration offices. This group will have access to many tools within the Oracle HRMS that will replace many of the current bespoke stand-alone systems. Finally, Professional Function Administrators will be employed within AFPAA in specialist 'back office' areas which include the Medal Office, the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre and other key Service Personnel Centre specialist areas.

■ CULTURAL CHANGE

Historically an individual's first port of call when a query or clarification required addressing was the unit administration staff; in the

future the individual will call the JPA Enquiry Centre (JPAEC) where his or her query will be answered by one of a team of experts. The JPAEC will also provide administration support to those individuals who are unable to access the DII system. If the JPAEC is unable to answer a query they will be able to refer the issue to the 'back office' for resolution by a team of specialists who will answer the query using telephone or email communications. This will be a significant cultural change; however, the local unit administration staff will still be available to assist personnel when necessary, but their work load will be reduced, allowing savings to be made.

■ CONCLUSION

Migrating all three Services' Regular and Reserve forces to one administration system meets the Strategic Defence Review goals of providing joined-up forces and integrated reserves. JPA will provide modern administrative procedures to the Services, giving individuals and administration staff the ability to manage their lives more efficiently while increasing the resources available for national defence.

