

Strategic Parts and Material Management- a Proactive Lifecycle Approach to Handle Obsolescence

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In a world driven by automation and technology advancement, obsolescence is inevitable. It is not a matter of “if” obsolescence will impact system supportability; it is a matter of “when.” If we think of obsolescence as something we react to, it will undoubtedly turn into a larger problem of availability, maintainability, supportability, cost, and high risk of mission impact for critical systems and programs. The problem is not obsolescence; it is how we manage parts and obsolescence through a reactive approach instead of a proactive lifecycle approach through systems analysis. The reliability and availability of original and replacement parts is critical for operational readiness; however, traditional lifecycle support management is no longer effective in minimizing the risk of obsolescence and the impact to the system’s cost and availability. The system lifecycle includes all phases of its existence, to include system conception, design and development, production and/or construction, distribution, operation, maintenance and support, retirement, phase-out, and disposal.

At first glance, it might appear that parts management deals with the beginning of the system lifecycle when parts are selected for system designs and obsolescence management addresses the end of the system lifecycle. In reality, both communities and their corresponding processes have roles in all phases of the system lifecycle and these roles interact with one another. For example, obsolescence and parts management roles should complement one another from early in the lifecycle until Low Rate Initial Production to avoid selecting parts susceptible to obsolescence issues during design. During production and sustainment, obsolescence management helps ensure identification and resolution of issues, but parts management still plays a role in parts selection as it pertains to system modernization and parts replacement. In support of their respective roles throughout the system lifecycle, both communities have activities relating to at least four areas: 1) contract requirements, 2) plans and teams, 3) selection of parts, and 4) supply chain integration.

This presentation discusses a systems analysis approach, addressing how initiating and conducting effective parts management and obsolescence management early and throughout a system’s lifecycles is the key for executing the most cost-effective strategy, reduce risk, and eliminate impact. Depending on the system phase, developing pre-emptive or proactive measures reduces risk and cost impact to sustainment functions, extends system life, and ultimately eliminates obsolescence from warfighter mission impact.



Robin Brown is the Diminishing Manufacturing Sources and Material Shortages (DMSMS) and Parts Management Program Manager for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Prior to joining the Defense Standardization Program Office (DSPO) in 2016, Ms. Brown was the NAVAIR DMSMS Lead and established a core centralized Team for NAVAIR which won the DoD DMSMS Team of the Year in 2014 and 2015 and helped NAVAIR avoid spending over \$1 billion dollars by managing DMSMS proactively. While at NAVAIR for 15 years, she provided DMSMS support to all 35 NAVAIR Program Offices, served as co-chair of the DoN DMSMS Working Group, and was awarded the Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Award. She also participated as an active member of DoD DMSMS Working Group for which she won the DoD DMSMS Individual Achievement Award in 2013. She was instrumental in the publication of the DoDI 4245.15 DMSMS Management. Prior to this instruction, there had been no stand-alone DMSMS policy since 1976. She is also responsible for the SD-19 DoD Parts Management Guide, DoD SD-22 DMSMS Guidebook, DoD SD-23 Item Reduction Guidebook, and the DoD SD-26 DMSMS Contract Language Guide. Ms. Brown continues to empower the Services to succeed by being their Champion in DMSMS and Parts Management.