



## Case Study

# Field-Based Logistics Training: Business as Usual for the U.S. Marine Corps

## Challenge

Logistics are central to the U.S. Marine Corps mission. Without personnel, supplies and equipment in the right place at the right time, the Marine Corps can't deliver on that mission.

At the same time, managing logistics for such a large, dispersed organization is very complex, requiring targeted training on everything from planning and executing the movement and support of forces to acquiring, storing, distributing, maintaining and disposing of assets.

That's why, for about two decades, the Marine Corps has relied on mobile training systems to provide both introductory and continuing training for its logistics personnel on the Global Combat Support System (GCSS). GCSS is the logistics piece of the Global Command and Control System (GCCS) that introduces cutting-edge enabling technology in support of logistics operations, while facilitating the modernization of aged logistics process and procedures.

While the method works well, it hadn't been upgraded in several years. During that time, the software and associated

databases had grown substantially, requiring more power and storage than the existing equipment could provide.

As a result, the Marine Corps Authority began searching for a replacement for its existing mobile training system. Requirements included everything needed for a pop-up classroom anywhere in the world, packaged into a kit.

The kit had to include a server and storage array (both from HPE), a mouse for every laptop, external hard drives, 8-port switches, extension cords, about two dozen laptops, cabling, and a printer, as well as many peripheral supplies like padlocks, Velcro and duct tape. The Marine Corps requested 100 kits to be fully vetted, tested and shipped to locations around the world.

"The kits had to be completely self-contained so the instructor could simply open it and be prepared for every possible contingency, and have a detailed plan and instructions," explained Jim Kizziar, a subject matter expert at Tuva, an Akima company, which eventually won the contract. Kizziar also is a former DISA program and project manager.

## Solution

After weighing its options, the Marine Corps eventually awarded Tuva the contract. Despite not being involved in previous generations of the logistics kits, Kizziar suspects that Tuva got the nod because of its strong reputation, along with its partnership with sister company, Affigent. The fact that they had previous experience providing kits to other areas of the Marine Corps, such as the Tactical Decision Kit for simulated battlefield training, probably bolstered its case as well.

Determining what components to use in each kit – there were 120 components in all – took time and research. Tuva, with advice from IT solutions expert Affigent, first settled on HPI ProBook 640G4 laptops running Windows 10 for the 24 student laptops and two instructor laptops. HPE ProLiant Servers were the first choice mainly due to their outstanding reputation as secure servers. Also, in part because the servers had been a successful part of the previous generation kit.

"It was definitely a team effort," Kizziar said. "Affigent is a turnkey IT solutions provider with skilled PMPs and solution architects on the team, so we relied on them for guidance on sourcing the equipment and related logistics."

There were some hiccups along the way. Initially, for example, Tuva built the prototype using WiFi to connect the laptops with the server and storage arrays that held the main training system. However, the Marine Corps could not get approval to use WiFi

because of coverage and security concerns. Tuva then changed course and connected the prototype with CAT6 cables.

When Tuva had a viable prototype, it was submitted to the Marine Corps, which requested certain changes. Once those were made, the prototype was complete.

That's when the work really began.

"It wasn't just about putting things into kits," explained Roger Foote, Director of Business Development at Akima, Affigent's parent company. "Jim and his team laid out all of the equipment, including racks for all of the servers and laptops. That way it was easy to load software and image the laptops. Then after testing everything, some equipment had to be replaced, and everything had to be double-checked. And they did it 100 times."

In addition to assembling the kits, Tuva recorded all serial numbers, labeled all kits and components, and included documentation, warranties and instruction manuals.

Once the work was complete – about twelve months after the initial award – Tuva shipped 40 of the kits to the Marine Corps' "schoolhouse" in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The rest are deployed to forward units across the United States, with some sent overseas.

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## Stats

186,000

The number of active Marine Corps personnel today

\$46 billion

Marine Corps budget for 2020

1798

The origins of Marine Corps logistics dates back to this year

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## Tips for Success

### Make sure your contractor and partners understand your mission

By going with a contractor that has worked with your organization or has performed well on similar projects in the past, you are all but guaranteed a good result.

### Your contractor is known by the company it keeps

If your contractor has a good reputation for delivering on time and paying attention to detail, you're probably in good hands. But if your contractor has good relationships with its partners, you're definitely in good hands.

### Insist on professionalism and creativity

Your contractor should be able to change direction or pivot when needed. If a tariff issue arises that causes constraint on the supply chain, for example, your contractor should be able to resolve it quickly and efficiently.

To learn more about how Affigent and HPE can assist with meeting your mission IT needs, please visit [affigent.com](http://affigent.com)