

BCKS wins knowledge management awards

by Bob Kerr
Command Information Officer

The Combined Arms Center's Battle Command Knowledge System was honored for its advances in applying knowledge management tools and techniques to the entire Army at the e-Gov Institute's 7th annual Knowledge Management Conference and Exhibition in Washington, D.C., April 20.

BCKS Director Col. Jim Galvin accepted awards on behalf of the BCKS team for "Best Initiative or Organization Successfully Using Knowledge Management Practices" and "Best Knowledge Management Initiative Delivering High Value to a Broad User Community/Supporting Agency Mission" for the online professional forum, LOGNet. BCKS won two of the four knowledge management awards presented at the conference.

"This recognition is particularly significant because the BCKS efforts prevailed over more than 50 other candidates from around the Department of Defense, the US. federal government, and state, local and some foreign governments," Galvin said.

Before BCKS, the process for gathering, validating and distributing knowledge was slow, often taking months to publish and reach Soldiers in the field. BCKS used information technology to develop an online knowledge management system, creating collaboration for the generation, storage

and rapid retrieval of information.

BCKS uses several unique collaboration capabilities, but the most visible aspect is its use of professional forums. In September 2004, there were four formal Army professional forums with about 20,000 members, according to BCKS documents. Now BCKS has more than 37 professional forums serving the needs of a wide variety of active, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers.

Galvin explained that BCKS provides the "connecting layer" between the operating forces and the generating forces.

Using the award-winning LOGNet as an example, the Army G-4, the schools, the Combined Arms Support Command and the Army Materiel Command are the generating forces, while the Soldiers and units in garrison and in the field are the operating forces. The LOGNet professional forum serves as a place for all Army logisticians to meet, solve problems, share best practices and improve professional development. The forum also allows users to share documents and software tools.

LOGNet was originally intended for use by maintenance, supply and transportation Soldiers working at brigade level and below as a way to push knowledge horizontally across the Army. But since its launch in January 2005, LOGNet caught the attention of all levels of Army logistics and has evolved as a way for Soldiers "at the tip of the spear" to share knowledge with those who are

developing doctrine and policy. Galvin said the professional forums provide a unique situation that can literally allow a private to share knowledge directly with a senior general officer.

BCKS is in the process of creating similar capabilities for the Army's maneuver communities of armor, infantry and aviation, Galvin said.

LOGNet currently has more than 12,000 members and gains about 50 members each day. It amassed nearly 28,000 "knowledge objects" in its first year. LOGNet is also being prepared to expand to the joint community.

Soldiers, Army civilians and others with AKO accounts can access the secure BCKS Web site at <https://bcks.army.mil>. From there, visitors can apply to join forums and gain access to a storehouse of information in the Warrior Knowledge Base and other aspects of knowledge management.

Lt. Col. Joe Koskey, deputy director, said BCKS' mission was recently expanded to include knowledge management training, "filling an essential gap that needs to be addressed." The training will focus on facilitating forums and provide a "virtual right-seat ride," he said.

Koskey said BCKS is also developing an advanced query capability, called entity extraction, that is far beyond the capabilities of current Internet search engines.

"It actually puts you into documents," Koskey said. "It's not artificial intelligence, but it's getting close."