



## CASE STUDY: U.S. Army Logistics Network (LOGNet)

### U.S. Army Logistics Network Drives Excellence in Logistics Support with Tomoye's Community of Practice Offering

#### Summary

The U.S. Army Logistics Network (LOGNet) directs the development and use of a knowledge management process to promote the sharing of logistical capabilities, vulnerabilities, and lessons learned throughout the U.S. Army. The LOGNet community of practice was established in response to a recognized need to provide logistics professionals within the Army with “experience on demand”, and to facilitate stronger connections between soldiers and units in the field or garrison, with Army institutions. Since implementing a community of practice based on Tomoye technology, knowledge and experience shared on LOGNet has resulted in improving the knowledge and experience level of the Army logistics workforce. The Army has been able to improve productivity to support the overall objective of driving excellence in logistics support.

#### Challenge

*“To successfully connect logisticians, a medium was needed to effectively transfer this information. We were sharing information by email which is really a one-to-one mechanism where very little collaboration takes place. Knowledge transfer was taking years and was being done the hard way.”*

**- Bob Dalton, U.S. Army Logistics Network (LOGNet) Facilitator**

In the U.S. Army, logisticians play an emerging and ever changing role, managing all logistical functions for soldiers and units both in the field and garrison. With conditions changing rapidly and new challenges arising regularly, having up-to-date information and best practices are key to the success of any logistician, regardless of their rank or location.

With logisticians spread across the world, the Army was faced with the inevitable challenge of working across geographic and time barriers. When information sharing did happen, it was in the form of an email, which offered limited communication. The reality was that while knowledge

transfer was taking place, it was limited to individuals who already knew each other and it was very slow.

Army institutions such as CASCOM, AMC, Schools and HQDA G-4, play an important role in the day-to-day life of logisticians providing initial and ongoing training, as well as developing and dictating doctrine. Often soldiers and units were often disconnected from these institutions, with only limited opportunities to directly share information and provide feedback to them.

To overcome these challenges, the Army started to look for ways to horizontally connect logistics professionals across the organization and facilitate the transfer of experience from those individuals who have it to those who need it.

## Solution

The Army reviewed a number of approaches incorporating knowledge management, collaboration and productivity tools and quickly identified a communities of practice (CoP) as offering the best approach to meet the Army's need to create a professional forum for several different groups. Tomoye, the Community of Practice Company, was selected to provide both technology and services to enable the Army to the U.S. Army's Battle Command Knowledge System (BCKS), as well as the U.S. Army Logistics Network or LOGNet.

Developed as part of the U.S. Army's Battle Command Knowledge System (BCKS) which is designed by soldiers for soldiers, to discuss ideas, share knowledge and solve problems, LOGNet was created to support logistics professionals in the Army. LOGNet delivers a means to transfer knowledge and experience between logisticians, regardless of their company or unit. This community, which has over 17,400 members across the world, takes tacit knowledge and turns it to "experience on demand" where members can quickly access information they need or turn to their peers for assistance, in a trusted and secure environment.

Tomoye's offering provides an easy and integrated web of people, knowledge and conversations that logisticians use to solve problems. They can browse and search a customizable set of tools and best practices, they can ask questions anywhere in the system when they don't understand or can't find something, and they can find and contact one of their peers directly where appropriate. All of this is powered by a set of simple but powerful tools that allow a regular user to become a contributor, mentor or community leader in under a day.

*"With LOGNet, we are providing experience from those who have it, to those who need it, with the community of practice acting as the means to transfer that experience. LOGNet acts as a professional forum to share latest thoughts, ideas, tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP), lessons learned from the experienced logisticians, regardless of rank or duty position. Tomoye's software is the transparent layer which makes this experience on demand happen."*

**- Bob Dalton, LOGNet Facilitator**

“The essentials of what we are doing with LOGNet can be transferred to any sector,” said Bob Dalton. “Tomoye provides an offering which makes knowledge management and collaboration practical.”

## Results

With LOGNet, the Army has moved to a horizontally-driven model for transferring knowledge within the logistics community. Now, logisticians can quickly and easily access the experience they need, without even knowing the people they are getting the knowledge from.

For example, a Lieutenant Colonel seeking to build a logistics support area was looking for doctrine on this area. He sent out an email through LOGNet, and a member responding that he knew of someone based in Iraq who had already done this. Through LOGNet, key players with experience in this area were brought together, and the Lieutenant Colonel had all the formal information he required to get the project up and running within a week. Also, LOGNet members at another base also volunteered to help him get the project going as they had just completed a similar project. Based on one email sent through LOGNet, and the resulting activities, there is now formal guidance on this area at the Center for Army Lessons Learned, where none existed before, which will eventually be turned into formal doctrine.

*“Now, logisticians have access to advanced knowledge, the price of which we just can’t quantify. Before LOGNet, the reality is that knowledge transfer was taking years and now valuable first-hand experience and information is transferred in a matter of days. Any given member has a network of thousands of mentors, which gives them the experience they need and helps us to drive innovation within the logistics profession in the U.S. Army.”*

**- Bob Dalton, LOGNet Facilitator**

LOGNet’s “experience on demand” model ensures that while experience transfers between members, that this information is then integrated with institutions, fostering a stronger connection with soldiers. For example, CASCOM, which trains logisticians and provides doctrine, relies increasingly on LOGNet to extend the overall value of training and learning. With LOGNet, institutions now have a mechanism to get feedback directly on the field on doctrine and training.

“LOGNet has revolutionized how doctrine is done,” said Bob Dalton. “Institutions post doctrine onto the community for feedback, and members provide direct unsanitized feedback. It used to take months for doctrine to go to units and feedback to return back up the chain where it would be often sanitized to the point of being useless. LOGNet provides a strong connection between the institution and the realities of the field, and does it in a matter of days.”

Overall, LOGNet, which is driven by Tomoye CoP technology, has resulted in significant improvements for logistics professionals. Members no longer need to search for an answer to a question or spend cycles trying to figure out who may be able to help them; they can quickly access this information which shortens the learning curve, while improving overall productivity.

“All and all, LOGNet, enables the Army to make logisticians better,” explained Bob Dalton. “We have been able to speed up innovation while pushing the needle on productivity and efficiency, which supports our overall objective of driving excellence in logistics support across the Army.”

## **Awards**

On April 20th 2006 LOGNet was awarded the prestigious 2006 Knowledge Management Award by the E-Gov Institute in the Knowledge Management Initiative Delivering High Value to a Broad User Community/Supporting Agency Mission category in recognition of LOGNet's efforts in the Knowledge Management field.

## **DISCLAIMER**

*The thoughts and opinions expressed by Mr. Bob Dalton in this case study represent his own personal opinions, thoughts and experiences with the products mentioned. This case study does not in anyway imply an endorsement by the U.S. Government, U.S. Department of Defense or U.S. Army of any products or services from Tomoye.*