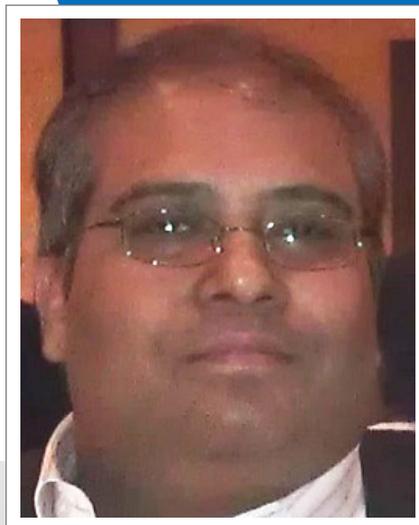


voices))) of integrity



Vijay Bekkem

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“Rather than fix the blame, fix the problem.”

My name is Vijay Bekkem. I am an IT specialist and product manager in the OI&T Department, Office of Information and Technology. Specifically, my area is architecture support and design. We provide IT systems integration and strategy and design for all Administrations, the Health, the Benefits and Memorials portfolios. In a nutshell, I can say we create the tools and the frameworks for the front-line providers to provide better services to the Veterans.

Integrity is one of my core values. If you don't have integrity, whatever else you do doesn't matter. You have to give the best you can honestly and try to get the best outcome possible in whatever you're doing. And you have to do it fairly and honestly.

I view myself as supporting the Veterans indirectly by enabling the front-line providers to do their jobs better. And so if I do a good job, then they'll have better tools to do their jobs better, and ultimately that translates into serving the Veteran better.

So for every dollar we spend, we should get the maximum benefit out to the end customer, who

is the American Veteran. One of the things I like to tell everybody is, “Let's own the problem.” In my own little small piece of the big VA puzzle, I try to tell my colleagues or my team members, “Rather than fix the blame, fix the problem.”

So that kind of opens up the people, they're not as defensive. Once they know where I'm coming from, you know I get responses which are a lot more open and constructive, as opposed to like trying to hide away the problem.

No system is perfect. Everything has some downside to it or the other. But if you honestly face your problems, own up to them and work on them, then I think eventually there will be a better outcome for the Veterans, for the taxpayers, rather than hide away the problem and hope it goes away.

But it does require a certain amount of moral courage to own up to one's mistakes. But I think ultimately that's the right thing to do. And if everybody stuck to that, I think there would be improved outcomes for the Veterans and the taxpayers.