

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS FOR CRM TRAINING

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Our airline has grown tremendously in the last three years. We've gone from some 40 pilots to 125, and 5 Metros to 22. And we have a diverse family of pilots from all parts of the country including five foreign nationals. We are finding that our goals that we are striving for are becoming fuzzy. People are not sure where we are heading. So we try to emphasize the communication aspects. We have a company psychologist, and we hired him because we had problems in other organizations, or other parts of the company; low morale, people not talking, etc. I got permission from the president to go ahead and use him for my CRM program.

We looked around at ways we could implement this. We looked at United's program. That quite frankly was much too expensive for us. At 1,250 bucks a person, we couldn't quite swing that. So we took our psychologist, and we sat down and we tried to come up with things that we wanted to emphasize. And there were many, many areas we could have talked about. But we settled on communication skills, listening, conflict resolution and task orientation.

We have a policy of not paying our pilots for training. They are paid for 83 hours every four weeks, and we consider any training as part of that 83 hours. So I ran up against a problem. I couldn't pay them for this training.

We also fly -- well, over a four week period we give them eight to ten days off, so we're flying them pretty heavy. And this training had to take place during their day off. So to start the program off, before they even came to the classroom I had negative feedback. I could be out boating. I'm not going to come to this crap. That's essentially what they are saying.

To open the meeting, we distributed a questionnaire to try and define what we thought were our problem areas, or how the pilots helped us to define it; how they felt about the company, about other pilots, the station agents, etc. This we analyzed and tried to identify areas that we wanted to emphasize in later programs.

Dr. Dave Dalkey our psychologist from Denver, Colorado, wants to introduce a subject, teach it and then demonstrate

it. So whenever we introduced something new, we'd talk about it, and then he would rely on role playing to act out how this theory or skill should work. I found this, and I think the pilots found it very good, because now they weren't talking about theory. They had something concrete. They had in their mind something to which they could relate.

We also tried to establish or focus on what the pilot did for the company, where he sits, how the company feels about him, how he helps accomplish company goals, reemphasizing company goals, and how he interacts with the other organizations in our airline.

We had the ground rules that you could say any thing you wanted to in this meeting. It never left the room. However, if you want to talk about another pilot you could not mention names. First officers and captains were together.

We reserved a seminar block for each domicile. We have three. And then at the end of the day we did a critique.

Now, to be frank, this first phase, was really a shotgun approach. We didn't really know where we wanted to go or what we wanted to hit. We just had an idea. My first thought was that the pilots weren't going to receive this very well and would be very, very negative. And to my surprise, every pilot I talked to enjoyed the training.

We apparently went in with just enough depth that the guy was anxious. He wanted to learn more. We tried to be nonjudgmental and just present ideas, things that he can use. Actually, we didn't even try to fit this into a flying situation. Everything we taught him we tried to point out that, hey you can use this in your normal everyday life, with your kids, your wife with your friends, whatever. These things apply to everyday life. I think this was the key to getting these guys' interest and keeping their interest, and hopefully they will want to come back for more.

We've had three of these seminars, and we have one more coming up. We aren't shooting for 100 percent attendance; we just can't do it. We've got to have people flying seven days a week, and I just can't force them to come on their days off all that time. So it is not compulsory, but we do recommend they come if they can.

What are we going to do in the future? Now we have this data, and we have a feel for what we want to do. We are going to take our psychologist and put him through a ground training program like a new hire pilot. And we are going to give him a set of headphones, and we are going to let him fly the line. And he's going to listen to our pilots' talk,

see how they operate, see how they are supposed to operate with the other station agents, ATC, etc.

After he has accumulated enough data, and he'll determine how much data is enough, we will start to draw up scenarios. The scenarios will not parallel any accidents either from us or from another carrier. They will be purely fictional scenarios. Each scenario though, we hope, will have an object lesson, teaching or emphasizing a certain skill and not just a shotgun blast. As with other programs, there will be no right, no proper answer, but we want the folks, the pilots, after the scenarios are done to talk about it, to suggest other solutions, to suggest how the scenarios could have gone better.

The scenarios will be done by way of role playing, no procedure trainer. Just two chairs sitting side by side. Keeping it as simple and, well, as low cost as possible. I've been told I can do anything I want as long as it doesn't cost anything. As a commuter airline I know you know where I'm coming from. I could eat up my company's profits in about a year if I really, really went after this, but they aren't going to let me do it, obviously.

Things that we found or that I think that we found, there are a lot of psychologists out there. And psychologists are a lot like pilots. They are different. They have a lot of the same personalities. Every one of them has their own way of doing things. If you do go out to select a psychologist, pick one you can live with. We've had two previous psychologists, and the pilots didn't like them, the company didn't like them, and furthermore, I didn't like them. Dr. Dalkey, however, has a personality, one, that pleased me, and two, he went over well with my pilots rapidly. As you know as we talk we hear ourselves and ask for questions and don't want to raise our hand. That's sort of common. After the first hour or two, I found the psychologist able to draw out my pilots. He was honest with them; told them what he was going to do, and he wasn't going to try to back stab them any way.

Like I said, we didn't start out with any program. We've developed three phases now, or have an outline of three phases. The second phase I told you about were scenarios. The third phase is trying to integrate this resource management into a yearly training situation. And we really haven't figured that out yet. We need more data, and we are really just in the infancy stage right now. I agree with Ed Carroll; it's pretty exciting. And when I can get 125 of my pilots to enjoy something, I think I've got something that's fairly well off.

We didn't emphasize leadership principles, per se. We

talked about communication skills, listening skills, set up conflicts and gave role playing to show how solutions would work. So in a roundabout way we backed over the leadership. During the next phase we will probably address it head on, address leadership styles and refine our program, focus it more towards the cockpit and how it works, how it fits in with the rest of the company.

So we are just beginning. We have a long way to go, but right now we are fairly happy with it.

MR. COLLIE: Thank you, Marty. Any questions?

Marty is going to chair working group number four tomorrow. All of the gentlemen are going to be here for the next couple days, if you have any questions, seek them out and talk to them individually.

Captain Jim Lawver, the chief pilot at Scenic Airlines, has about as difficult a job as anyone. Scenic uses single pilots in their Cessna 402/404's and I don't know how Jim figures out what the pilots are doing.

Scenic is to be commended, because about four years ago they had that accident at Grand Canyon. After that accident they did an enormous amount of training. They have an ATC-810 training device that has been modified to fly like their Cessnas, and they've done a tremendous amount of work training their pilots to fly airplanes that really don't have a lot of takeoff performance.

Scenic agreed to incorporate their dynamic training device in the CRM program. So, Jim, will you tell us how it's working?