

How to Acquire, Retain & Develop Your Bizav Team

*+ Written specially for business aviation
leaders and hiring managers*



Aviation Personnel International



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01

THE AVIATION TALENT SHORTAGE IS HERE & NOW

By Colleen Kelly



As any keen observer of the aviation industry would likely agree, change is our primary constant.

Even in an industry like ours that's forever in flux, 2016 has a very different vibe than in the past—even when compared to last year.

One of the greatest issues is the evaporating talent pool for aviation professionals. Our clients—the leaders of aviation departments—are describing an atmosphere of real concern regarding the hunt for talent.

In fact, their usual “go-to” network of aviation friends and family is rapidly drying up.

And it's been widely published that the commercial aviation industry—where business aviation pilots and mechanics often build their flight hours and experience—is facing even more talent shortage issues.

In March 2016, Time magazine reported on the crisis of dwindling pilots, citing the fact that “at present, the problem of pilot supply is endemic throughout the regional airline industry.”



Although we do not recruit for commercial aviation, I recently received a call from a regional airline recruiter. She was requesting advice regarding their pilot compensation strategy. In particular, she wanted to know if her salary offering was sufficiently competitive to potentially recruit from the business aviation industry.

When she shared her hourly pay schedule, I told her “absolutely not.” She then shared with me that some of their competitors are paying nearly double the salary this particular regional is offering.

This kind of imbalance creates a lot of disruption with aviation talent gravitating—understandably—to the regional airlines.

In 2015, an Aviation International News article in which the director of operations for Obadal, Filler, MacLeod and Klein, noted that there's evidence of a looming crisis in the maintenance workforce every day.

So, in such a tumultuous environment, an obvious question that arises is how aviation companies can prepare for a smooth succession when an upcoming opening—say a retirement, for example—will leave a gap in the staff.

Consider Timing—Start Now

The solution, we advise our aviation hiring managers, is straightforward: “Plan ahead.”

First off, they should be in regular communication with HR to keep them apprised of the timeline for the opening. And, as leaders, they should have an evolving plan for what their team should look like for the next 12 months.

As exaggerated as this may sound, our team here at API has heard from flight departments (both clients and non-clients) that it's taking up to nine months to replace key talent.

That means aviation hiring managers should be prepared to engage the process earlier than usual.

And that process should look something like this:

1. Talk to your HR partner about timing
2. Write the job requisition and get it approved
3. Create the job description and make sure it's ready to distribute
4. Share the job description with your HR partner at the earliest possible time.

Remember, there's nothing wrong with initiating a candidate search while the employee who currently holds the position is still on the job. And this is doubly true if the employee's eventual departure has already been announced.

After all, you don't have a lot of time to waste.

Keep in mind that, when you lose an employee (for any number of reasons), it could be a minimum of three months until you hire someone new for the job.

And then there's the learning curve to account for—getting the new hire oriented and acclimated. Although it's not always the case, it can take up to a year to return to a smoothly running department in the wake of a newly hired team member.

So, to re-emphasize, managing your bandwidth is critical to running a smooth team, department or operation.

A Special Note on Succession Planning and Relocation

I do want to focus on something I just mentioned above. And that's the time you'll need to devote to replace a key professional on your aviation team.

Let's say, for example, that it's May, and you're planning a July retirement for a chief pilot, director of maintenance or aviation director.

Then, let's say that your tentative plan is to have their replacement on board by September. Whether you plan to work with an outside recruiter or use insider resources, you'll want to start now.

And know that the process might not be as simple as in year's past.

Yes, our market is extremely tight, but the other reason is that business aviation is very "relocation-reliant."

Although it's not unheard of, you simply can't depend upon being able to hire a high-caliber professional from your local area. With API, nearly 70 percent of our placements involve relocating families—and most of them have school-age children.

It means that, from the potential new hire's side of things, the timing needs to be ideal if he or she has to relocate their family.

A better plan, in the example above, would be to bring someone on board in the fourth quarter. This gives you an ample head start to acclimate your new employee to take over the reins when the current team member leaves.

You're also giving the new hire plenty of room to make all the necessary accommodations for finding housing, schools and all the other responsibilities that a move entails. They can also complete their pilot and/or maintenance training as needed, which often adds two to three weeks to your onboarding timeline.

Of course, it's a fact that the aviation talent shortage is affecting our industry in many different ways, but I hope you agree with me that the impact on timing is a critical one. Here at API, we're working to help our clients minimize that impact every time it arises.

PILOT SHORTAGE: HOW WE GOT HERE & WHAT'S NEXT

By Sheryl Barden



Times are tough and there's definitely both a pilot and an aviation maintenance professional shortage.

But how did we get here? What's the root cause?

First, let's examine what created this talent gap so we can plan some strategic steps to help correct it.

The Perfect Storm: How the Pilot Shortage Happened

As you're likely well aware, the aviation industry, and, even more acutely, the business aviation sector, is in the early stages of a long-predicted shortage of trained aviation talent.

The shortage affects both pilots and aircraft maintenance professionals, but the reasons for the shortages in the two professions are different. This blog focuses on the root cause of the pilot shortage.

Since October, 2011, I've referred to this issue as the "Perfect Storm," because a variety of factors have combined at the "perfect" time to create this shortage.

In large part, it's caused by more than a decade-long stagnation at the major airlines.

If we trace the talent shortage to its origins, we can see that it began post-9/11, and was exacerbated by the subsequent economic downturn in 2008-2009 and the soaring cost of flight training.



A Quick Timeline

Immediately after 9/11, there was a significant pilot furlough by all of the major airlines. Pilots were forced to look for other opportunities, both in and outside of aviation.

In the 15 years since that time, new pilot hiring for the majors has been virtually non-existent.

In 2007, the FAA extended the mandatory retirement age from 60 to 65, which halted a natural turnover of personnel through attrition. This meant that the only entry path for new airline pilots was via the regional carriers, at wage rates that literally qualified them for food stamps.

With the cost of civilian pilot training rivaling that of medical doctors, and the return on investment so low, the attractiveness of the career fell off significantly.

Coupled with a drawdown of our U.S. military, a traditional source for trained pilots, our pool of new talent has shrunk dramatically.

(FACT: In 2009, the U.S. Air Force started to train more drone operators than pilots).

In very late 2012, the airlines began to retire pilots again.

The initial openings those retirements created were filled by furloughed pilots, some of whom were no longer in aviation but had returned to flying, and some who had spent the preceding 15 years in business aviation.

This began the movement of pilots from business aviation to commercial aviation.

Many business pilots held off until the choice was either to return or resign, and, of course, a number chose not to return.

When the recall lists were depleted, the majors began to pull talent from the regional carriers.

In 2016, the airlines started to aggressively recruit from the ranks of business aviation, and it has become a snowballing issue.

Starting pay at the airlines has risen, and, with the vast numbers of pilots retiring, the time to upgrade to captain has narrowed significantly.

This is only the tip of the iceberg, though.

Airline pilot retirements at several of the major airlines will begin to increase in 2018. Pilot retirements will peak for American in 2023, and Delta in 2022. United and Southwest retirements will peak in 2026.

By the end of 2026, 42 percent of the active pilot workforce at the five largest airlines will retire.

On average, American Airlines leads the industry in pilot retirements with 790 pilots retiring each year from now through 2026.

While this may have been a bit of a long story, it is necessary background in order to understand what is happening today.

What Makes the Airlines Attractive?

To further our understanding of what happened, another important question to ask is: what makes the airlines so attractive as to create a significant migration to their ranks?

Being an aviation recruiter, I've talked with several corporate aviation pilots who, in the past few years, have made the decision to leave business aviation for the airlines.

One of our former candidates, Mark Erickson, who was a senior captain for both Enterprise Holdings and MCI Corporation, is now a flying for American Airlines as a first officer.

He shared with us some interesting statistics, echoing the following reasons why many business aviation pilots are turning to the airlines.

Compensation

Where compensation is involved, the airlines offer some welcome transparency.

Importantly, pilots are given a clear picture of precisely what their compensation packages will consist of through their published contracts.

Retirement

The airlines guarantee that they will directly fund the personal retirement accounts of their employees; pilot 401K accounts are being directly funded in the range of 3-16 percent of salary.

The funds in these accounts immediately belong to the individual, and can't be taken away should the airline get into financial trouble and go bankrupt, as many airlines experienced in the recent past.

Schedule

Airlines work schedules are concrete and predictable, allowing for pre-defined down-time (including vacation, holidays, etc.). As fast as people are retiring from the airlines, pilots are getting this “seniority” perk fairly quickly.

Stability

This is a twofold issue.

One of the most important aspects of it is the promise of long-term compensation should one lose his or her pilot medical insurance.

Different from corporate disability programs that require employees to find another job in the company, the contracts generally pay 50-60 percent of the pilots’ income until retirement.

Airline pilots will most likely never need to relocate their families because they can typically commute to any base. This means they never have to worry about a spouse having to leave his or her career, or any other hardships that a move might create.

Pilots learned after the TARP buyout in 2008 that the viability of a corporate flight department is a variable that is out of their control. Airlines are in the business of flying airplanes, while corporations generally use airplanes to create more usable time and provide greater security for their employees.

Stability is also factored into a pilot rationalizing his move to an airline by saying:

“When I’m flying that 777 at 60 years old, I’m getting paid \$350K to work four days a week.”

How Does BizAv Compete with the Airlines?

The business aviation industry, to its credit, is making some changes to try and compete for talent with the airlines. For one thing, the compensation landscape in business aviation is changing at a rapid pace.

Weekly, I learn of Part 91 operators who are making across-the-board changes to compensation and schedules for both pilots and maintenance professionals. These operators know how critical it is to retain trained talent that fits within their culture.

Because of the fast-moving pace, however, salary survey data is likely becoming obsolete before it's even published. Business aviation salary surveys benchmark strictly similar, "like organizations" (e.g., fleet size).

In today's world, we need to also be benchmarking airline salaries, not just other "like flight departments."

What I can definitively tell you is this: **most of the "heavy iron" corporate operators have raised compensation for international captains to total cash compensation levels north of \$200,000.**

With a limited supply of pilots and an overall recovery in the US airline industry, major airline pilot pay and benefits should, in theory, continue to move higher as the majors airlines compete for talent.

Many of the operators who've already made across-the-board changes include brand names that we know quite well. In addition, in order to retain pilots, organizations are adding headcount to provide more "life balance" with the schedule.

At least one Part 91 operator offers a program that rivals that of the airlines: should one lose his/her medical certificate, he/she would receive continuous pay for the balance of their anticipated career.

Where Do We Go from Here?

I know I've painted a rather bleak picture of the current marketplace, but as unpleasant as it might seem, I think it's realistic.

Unfortunately, there's no "silver bullet" solution to the employment situation for business aviation.

Instead, my advice is to:

Continually remind your pilots of the benefits of working for your organization.

Highlight the state-of-the-art equipment you fly, the places you go, team camaraderie and more. Make sure to cite anything whatsoever that they might not be offered somewhere else.

You'll also want to mention the opportunity they'll have to be developed and rewarded for their performance, rather than having any rewards based on their seniority number.

Talk to your HR partner, reporting executive and/or owner.

Explain the complexities of business aviation and what's happening in the industry. The airlines only have to hire a licensed pilot.

Corporate operators need to hire a pilot that fits the company culture.

And, they have to invest heavily in high-dollar, airplane-specific training for each new pilot.

When a pilot leaves, so does the investment in training, so there is value in retaining such an individual.

Share our blogs with them, or ask them to call me directly. There's certain information I can share confidentially with our clients that I cannot post in a public forum, such as this blog.

Do not rely exclusively on compensation data that published in 2016 (or even this year).

If you do, plan to add 10-20 percent more and then some, if you have specific type-rating requirements or live in a high-priced locale.

Get creative with your scheduling and personal development options.

You want to try and create a "sticky" work environment for your staff.

Lastly, remember that there will always be business aviation pilots because of the unique opportunities our industry represents. But, because of the situation, attracting new pilots and retaining those who are, today, under 40 years old will be a challenge for years to come.

This may sound overly dramatic, but I truly fear we may lose a whole generation—or at least experience a big gap in the next generation coming up and into business aviation.

If we cannot recruit new pilots and retain our existing ones in business aviation, we'll fail to achieve a balanced group of professionals across multiple generation.

PILOT COMPENSATION: KEY TO ATTRACTION & RETENTION

By Sheryl Barden



What's the No. 1 reason Part 91 flight departments are losing their qualified talent?

It's pilot compensation.

That's according to 41 aviation directors who participated in a 2017 survey conducted by Aviation Personnel International.

As a wrap-up to our series on attraction and retention, this post will dig into our survey results to discover the following:

Are pilots leaving and, if so, why?

Where are they going?

How are aviation leaders retaining talent?

Is the talent shortage affecting everyone?

Why Pilots are Leaving and Where They're Going

Of the 41 flight department leaders we surveyed in April 2017, 26 organizations lost a total of 52 employees within the past year.

The 52 pilots who left their department cited the following reasons:

- 16 left for another Part 91 pilot role
- 14 took a pilot position at an airline
- 8 retired
- 13 cited other reasons
- 1 left due to health reasons

Of the 16 pilots who left for another Part 91 role, their decisions were affected by compensation, schedule, career advancement, career stability and location.

“We’re finding it hard to get qualified pilots to come into corporate aviation,” said one respondent. “They are jumping to the airlines for the salaries, schedule and retirement packages.”



Fifty-six percent raised comp across all pilot roles—with new compensation levels increasing anywhere from one to 40 percent.

Twenty-two percent of directors have not yet changed their compensation plan, but about half intend to do so.

Changes to Pilot Compensation

API asked directors if they've adjusted compensation to meet the changing needs of the marketplace.

Seven percent only changed their compensation when particular pilots showed signs that they were leaving.

Another seven percent plan to increase pay in 2017.

One director increased salary for two of his pilots.

"We thought they were below industry average, and had the most to gain by leaving," he explained. "They were not hinting at leaving; we were just being as proactive as possible."

Of the 22 percent of respondents that have yet to increase pilot compensation, about 50 percent plan to make changes, while 10 percent have no plans to make any changes.

One director mentioned this:

"While we have not been affected by the pilot shortage, our compensation levels have been adjusted to be competitive in the market place in terms of retention."

Twenty-three departments increased pay over six percent. That is double the nation's average of a three percent raise in 2016.

Not Just Pilot Comp Affected

Within the past year, 28 department leaders have increased pay for other roles within the aviation organization.

Those functional areas include:

- Maintenance function (21 departments)
- Flight department leadership (12 departments)
- Scheduler & Dispatcher function (11 departments)
- Flight attendant (4 departments)
- Other roles (3 departments)

No matter what the role, 35 out of 41 respondents increased compensation in the past year—up to a whopping 40 percent!

Here's the breakout for 2016-17 pay increases for all aviation functions (not just pilots):

1 department – 31 to 40 percent

2 departments – 21 to 30 percent

6 departments – 11 to 20 percent

14 departments – 6 to 10 percent

12 departments – 1 to 5 percent

The Ability to Attract Qualified Candidates

Not all aviation organizations are on board to change compensation. A few of them have not seen problems getting resumes, nor have they had anyone leave.

“We’ve not been affected yet [by the talent shortage], but we keep an active dialogue with many professionals in the industry to enhance our posture for when we may need to recruit,” said one director.

We also received this comment:

“On our recent hire, we had several hundred applicants so we have not seen a shortage. That said, I know several flight departments looking for pilots due to loss to airlines.”

In some cases, the interested applicants do not fit the desired qualifications.

“Unfortunately, at least 30 percent of the applications are from retired or retirement-eligible persons who are leaving the airlines,” explained a respondent.

“Another 30 percent are fishing for a position. Of the resumes we received, only about 25 percent fit the criteria that were defined.”

Extending Attractive Offers

In addition to asking why pilots leave, we also wondered if pilots were rejecting new hire offers.

Within the past year, seven leaders extended offers to pilot candidates, and were declined. Four of those seven rejections were due to compensation.

“Hiring is more challenging and compensation packages need to be reviewed,” explained one director. “I’m concerned that we’re competing with the airlines, and I’m not sure it’s a winnable position from an industry standpoint.”

Department Changes Beyond Compensation

We also asked leaders if they've adjusted their staffing levels, thus allowing flight departments to offer better schedules or better work/life balance.

Here's what we learned from the 41 directors surveyed:

- 21 departments have not changed staffing levels
- 12 departments have added headcount
- 8 departments changed the way they schedule
- 1 department is evaluating a more predictable crew schedule (e.g., hard days off)
- 1 department added more contractors

Speaking of contractors, we found it creative that at least two flight departments are relying on elastic workforce to fill newfound gaps.

"We decided to use more contract flight crew to enhance the 'quality of life' issues of our full-time staff. We have found it challenging to find well-qualified and proficient temporary help. The few that we have found are very busy and hard to schedule on a short-notice basis."

"We satisfied our need with retired corporate pilots, using them on retainer or on an ad-hoc basis. We pay for their training."

Does More Pay Retain Talent?

Compensation ranks as the top reason pilots leave jobs. Yet there is no direct correlation between the departments that have increased pay and pilots who have left.

The leaders that have increased pay since 2016 have done so because they lost one or more pilots. Or they are being proactive so that they do not lose valuable, trained pilots.

Thus, raising compensation enables aviation directors to compete with other aviation organizations—and the airlines. The moral of the story is that "pay" is a key driver for attracting qualified pilots.

One corporate director shared with me that he lost a pilot to a private flight department. The high-net-worth owner wooed him with a 25-percent increase in pay.

When deciding whether to stay or leave, many pilots are asking the question: *"What's in it for me?"*

So, are you ready and able to answer that question?

HOW A BIZAV LEADER SECURED \$1M IN PILOT COMPENSATION

By Sheryl Barden

“My pilots owe you big time, Sheryl.”

This was the start of a conversation I had with a Fortune 100 flight department leader at the Morristown Regional meeting this past September.

He told me that he felt his gratitude was owing to some of the analysis I provided in my blog entitled, “Pilot Shortage: How We Got Here & What’s Next”, and another, Pilot Compensation is Key to Attraction & Retention.

Both articles helped him explain to his corporate business partners that they needed to initiate a significant, across-the-board compensation increase for its pilots.

He added, “Thanks to you, I was able to make a strong business case for a \$1.1M increase in pilot compensation—and I got it.”

As we’ve shared throughout the year, the competitive landscape in business aviation has changed.

And this flight department leader hit the nail on the head with this observation: “There’s a new competitor in town and it’s the legacy carriers. They’re aggressively recruiting our talent.”

He shared with me the story of how one of his captains, furloughed many years ago, was called back by United and offered a deal he couldn’t refuse. They were willing to bring him back at the seniority level he would have been at had he not left.

The flight department leader told me: “He came to me to discuss the offer, and, knowing his goals and the number of years he had left to work pre-retirement, I told him he’d be ridiculous not to take the offer.



With nine years remaining in your career, you don’t walk away from \$100K more per year. That’s nearly \$1M before retirement that I couldn’t match.”

That’s when this director knew he needed to do something. He reviewed the status of the remaining pilots on his team and estimated that 70 percent of them were also at risk for leaving for the airlines.

He said: “I never let a good crisis go to waste.”

So, he put a package/proposal together that would educate his company's aviation reporting executive, HR partner and compensation department regarding the threat this situation posed.

The package contained research culled from my blog as well as compensation numbers for the legacy carriers and NetJets. The proposal reached all the way up to the Chief Administration Officer.

In his report, he had to admit to his company's senior managers that the situation had caught him off-guard. "I knew about the pilot shortage," he told them, "but I didn't see it coming as hard and fast as it did. It's real and it's accelerating."

He said he explained to them that they had two options.

First, they could do nothing and simply deal with the outcome as it eventually would occur.

The result of choosing that path would have been rapid attrition and the prospect of having to hire in a talent shortage, which would mean rehiring at a lower level of experience.

He also explained to his management the turnover cost that resulted every time a pilot leaves the company.

"Realistically, it's a \$200K investment out the window every time a pilot leaves," he explained, adding that his estimate was based on the cost of an aircraft type rating, plus the loss of productivity and travel expenses during training.

(Note: This assumption doesn't include in-house recruitment costs, relocation or onboarding, etc.)

The other alternative he offered was facing up to the fact that they have a serious problem, and then trying to do something about it.

"Luckily for us," he told me, "our company has a cultural mindset that we need to identify problems quickly, fix them and move on just as quickly."

So that's what this Fortune 100 company did.

They moved rapidly to make an average increase of \$80K per pilot, thereby matching the pay of captains at legacy carriers with 10+ years of tenure.

Granted, the new compensation package didn't equal that of the retirement at the airlines, but it was more competitive, and this company prides itself on being competitive.

So, the moral of the story?

As this aviation director said to me, **"if you're going to take a bite out of the proverbial apple, take as big a bite as you can. Don't just nibble and wish you could go back for more, because likely you only get one bite.**

BIZAV SURVEY: THE MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE



By Sheryl Barden and Jennifer Steele

Are we in the midst of a business aviation maintenance shortage?

The answer is a resounding “yes,” according to 89 percent of business aviation maintenance leaders surveyed by API.

Of the 45 respondents we surveyed, 55 percent of them have lost one or more maintenance professionals in the past year.

In fact, from our survey data, a total of 43 maintenance professionals have left 24 different organizations.

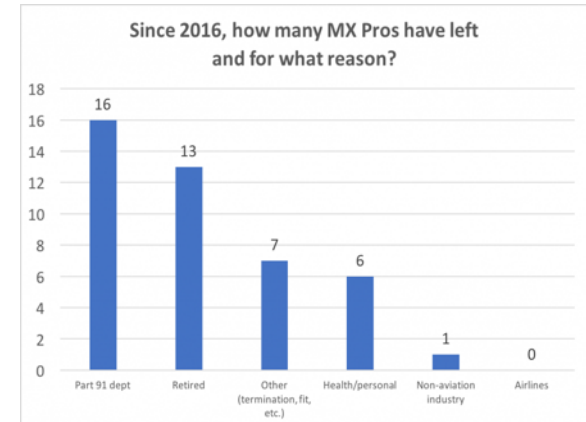
The 43 who left their departments in the past year cited the following reasons:

- 16 left for another flight department
- 13 retired
- 7 left for “other reasons” (e.g., performance issues)
- 6 left due to personal or health reasons
- 1 left for a non-aviation industry

If one or more employees left, they often cited one or more reasons.

“Schedule” and “career growth” were tied as reasons why an employee left the organization.

The number three reason was related to “compensation,” followed by “location” and “career stability.” A few responses in the “other” category are related to termination.



Survey Says . . .

The maintenance study was completed after our pilot talent shortage survey proved so popular with aviation industry professionals.

Participants included mostly Directors of Maintenance or Chiefs of Maintenance from U.S.-based Part 91 flight departments of all sizes.

However, unlike the pilot shortage, we cannot point to the airlines as a primary source of the aviation maintenance shortage.

Instead of being lured by the competing Part 121 industry to make more money (as pilots are), mechanics are focused on retirement, leaving departments with longer-tenured shoes to fill.

When we asked about the average tenure of maintenance pros within each flight departments, many cited an average of 20-30 years.

This means several organizations are “top-heavy,” with longer tenured mechanics remaining in their roles.

With fewer students entering technical schools, the talent gap isn’t going away any time soon. According to one respondent, “The shortage will greatly affect us as we have four senior flight engineers who are retiring in five years.”

The talent gap is real, and an issue for this maintenance director:

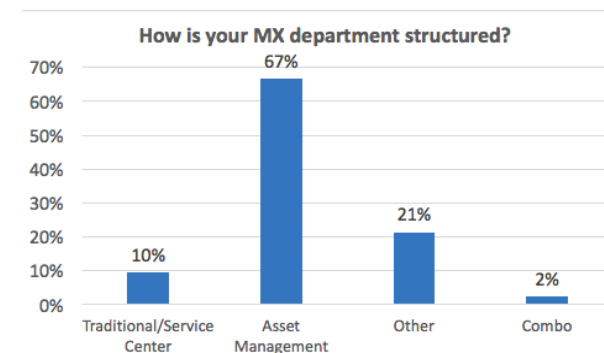
“Qualified individuals can only be obtained by removing them from existing, high-level peer organizations.”

Just what skills are we talking about? All kinds—from inspection, avionics, maintenance and line service to flight techs and leadership roles.

Going back to the survey, 67 percent of those departments make use of an “Asset or Tail Management” model, wherein a maintenance professional is responsible for a specific aircraft.

About 10 percent use a “Traditional” or “Service Center” model, employing a hierarchical structure with specialized roles in inspection, avionics, maintenance and line service.

The balance of departments operate with a combination of the two models.



7 Questions Re: MX Pro Shortage and Industry Status

In sum, the survey results provide us with a pretty good picture of where we are regarding maintenance professionals in this industry.

Following are seven additional questions we asked:

Meanwhile, 13 percent have done so for one or more individuals who showed signs that they were leaving.

On the other hand, 36 percent said they have not made any compensation changes, while 13 percent feel that their compensation is at or above industry standards.

Several directors listed in the “no” category have already increased wages to be at or well above the industry, as one noted with this comment: “Compensation is above peer operators; it increases yearly with company and individual performance.”

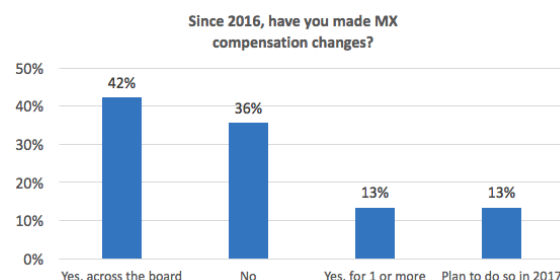
2. If you’ve not yet made comp changes, do you feel you should?

Of the 20 department leaders who haven’t raised pay levels in the past year, 45 percent feel they should make changes to pay structures.

Thirty percent have asked management in that regard, but were turned down, while 15 percent do not feel compensation should change.

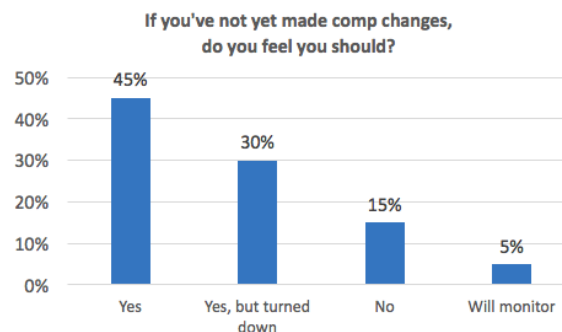
At least two departments in the “no” category feel this way because they’ve proactively made compensation changes within the past 5 years to be competitive in today’s market (one was between an 11-20 percent increase).

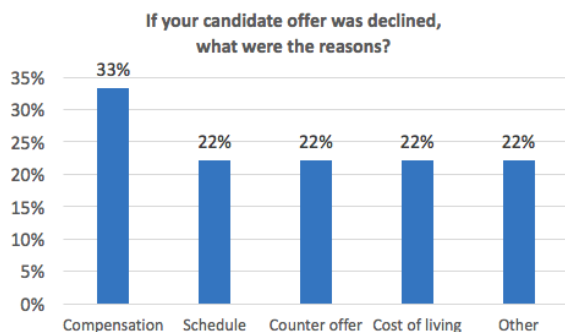
Several leaders noted that they already pay at (or above) the competition.



1. Since 2016, have you made comp changes for your MX pros?

In the past year, 42 percent of respondents have made compensation increases across the board for their maintenance professionals.





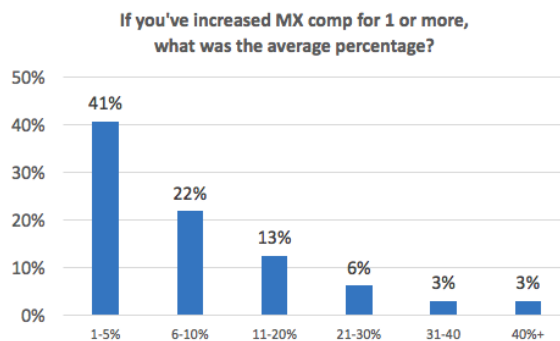
3. If you recently made an offer to a MX candidate who declined your offer, list all reasons that apply.

Only nine – or 20 percent – of the aviation departments surveyed told us that one of their maintenance candidates recently declined a job offer.

Those nine departments cited 11 reasons for the decline, with the biggest factor related to compensation—but not by much. Other factors included schedule, cost of living and counter offers.

Following are further explanations from respondents:

- “Concerns that the department may downsize due to changing company structure.”
- “Candidate valued frequent flying on the aircraft as a flight tech. We only offer this role on rare occasions.”
- “Didn’t want to work the off shift.”
- “Felt he needed to stay at a service [center] for more experience.”



4. If you've increased MX comp for one or more pros, what was the average percentage?

Of the 32 flight departments who've recently increased compensation for one or more individuals, the majority of them (41 percent) gave their maintenance pros a 1-5 percent increase, which is the average industry wage increase.

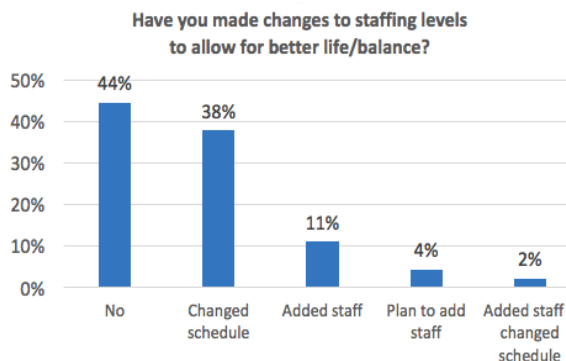
Meanwhile, 22 percent gave increases in the 6 to 10-percent range. Thirteen percent increased compensation from 11-20 percent. Two operators gave an increase between 21 and 30 percent and another two flight departments each gave increases that were 31-40 percent and above 40+.

One respondent commented:

“After doing several interviews with other departments, my company took a look at my total compensation and made a significant monetary change (60-70 percent increase) to match the industry. In my opinion, compensation should never be a reason for departments losing talent.”

And another had this to say:

“Yes, we increased compensation for selected individuals. We did this to ensure our compensation was in line with industry, not as a method to keep someone from leaving. We had to onboard a technician and found our compensation needed to be updated if we were going to be competitive in the market.”



5. Have you made changes to your MX staffing levels to allow for better life balance/schedule?

Life/balance issues remain a critical factor in achieving or maintaining adequate MX pro staffing levels.

Thirty-eight percent of respondents said that, in response, they changed their employees' schedules to enable them to better balance their work/life, and 11 percent said that they added headcount to alleviate the issue.

A sizable number, 44 percent, responded that they've not made any changes in this regard.

6. How has the maintenance shortage affected your department?

Written responses to this survey question offered a clear snapshot of the state of the maintenance professional shortage.

Overall, most of the comments echoed this respondent's straightforward statement: “Yes, there is a lack of skilled technicians. The technicians that are available have zero to five years of experience, and the pool of technicians with 10-20 years has dried up.”

Here are other perspectives from the respondents:

— “Difficulty finding qualified new hires. Cannot find qualified AMTs to contract if needed. I've also noticed a trend at MROs having difficulty retaining talent to work on business jets.”

— “Ten years ago, when we posted an open position for a maintenance technician, we had at least 30 qualified applicants. Today we may receive four or five.”

— “We hired a few years ago, the process took three to four months longer than anyone thought, and we barely had three good candidates to pick from. We ended up with a great guy.”

— “We must be considering the need to establish a ‘pipeline’ of talent, and also understand the need to compensate fairly.”

— “Been trying to locate a part-time maintenance technician for two months—no applications!”

— “We have seen the average age of applicants steadily going up over the last few years. This has a minimal impact but will become an issue once these people leave the workforce.”

7. Have you implemented recruiting strategies that you’d like to share?

Responses in this section were plentiful and interesting. Following are a few of them:

— “All of the technicians are treated like family. They have all worked in some of the more challenging aviation areas and appreciate being treated fairly. They regularly comment on that fact. That being said, it does not make up for being paid below corporate survey standards. Add to that a company initiative to not give raises for the next year and keeping technicians may become an issue.”

— “[Our philosophy is] 80 percent hire on personality and cultural fit, 20 percent on job requirements and experience.”

— “We have been able to hire [younger people] from within our company; hopefully, we can train them early in their career.”

— “I’ve only had one opportunity and corporate HR took over. The outcome was positive, the process was not!”

Next Step: Start Now

To summarize the results, yes, there is indeed a maintenance professional shortage, and flight departments will feel it as they try to replace headcount.

So, just what does one do with this information?

Renew your focus on keeping star players.

Several aviation directors sounded off about what it takes to retain top talent in this blog. Among the topics were: providing upfront transparency, cross-training and internal mobility opportunities.

Talk to your HR partner and make them your ally.

Perhaps they are unaware of the shortage and need to be educated so they can help you formulate a recruiting strategy.

If you know of upcoming retirements, start mining for talent now within your own department, and, as well, among your network contacts.

Help them understand the various sources to find talent. As specialized aviation recruiters, one thing we've experienced is that MX professionals tend not to relocate unless they're at the leadership level.

That means departments must find qualified talent locally, which often results in talented prospects being recruited by another Part 91 flight department.

Start your succession plan.

Don't wait until a person retires; hire them and then train them on the job (in a job shadow situation).

It might take five to eight months to find the right fit, but it will be worth it to get ahead of the process, rather than behind it.

Try altering the schedule.

Since schedule is the number one reason people leave, perhaps adjusting the available work times can help you retain talent and attract up-and-comers with growth opportunities.

One department offered this solution:

"We have a pretty nontraditional schedule to help with the work/life balance. We're a very busy flight department with lots of Friday nights and

weekends, along with flying on the airplane. We cover normal business hours 0800 – 1630, and have early hours, flex hours as well as late hours. I also give a day off for weekend work."

Network with mid-level professionals to let them know when you'll be hiring—even if it's only going to occur within the next few years.

[Here's a proactive mindset:](#)

["I'm always looking for prospects or at least have that in the back of my mind when meeting people. I have line-service technician positions that have potential to develop into an A&P position. LinkedIn is a great tool to connect and stay connected with people that you don't see very often."](#)

Talk to technical schools and universities to collaborate on internships.

One department leader shared with us this recruiting strategy:

“We offer 12-week internships and a one-week student development opportunity to expose students to business aviation.”

Another director shared this creative solution:

“We identified a college student whom we wish to employ after he gains experience. We negotiated an agreement with a MRO that we will pay for this individual’s maintenance “initial” if they will hire him in an aircraft maintenance role. The understanding is that we will hire him once an opening is available in our department.”

Get creative with training and outsourcing, as this leader did:

“Because we can’t find available qualified technicians with avionics/connectivity skills, we’ve had to refocus training for technicians with mostly mechanical skills to get them up to speed with the new technology and avionics.

Additionally, some avionics work that would have been done in-house is now sent out to MROs.”

Reach out to us to see if you might benefit from specialized recruiting services.

WHY YOU MAY BE FAILING TO RETAIN “A” PLAYERS

By Sheryl Barden

One of the more fascinating things to come out API's "Innovation Zone" panel at last year's NBAA-BACE, was our survey results from roughly 40 bizav organization leaders.

API's survey—which was distributed to the aviation directors roundtable and other flight department leaders—focused on how to create “sticky” cultures. And what we mean by “sticky” is how to attract high-quality aviation talent to their flight department. And then retain them by keeping those employees engaged.

Aside from “brand” and “reputation,” our bizav respondents also listed several other issues that contribute to talent retention, including the quality of work and life balance, and the level of compensation a company or department offers.

Also high on the list of best practices was giving employees some autonomy in their departments—to let them have a voice—especially regarding the selection of new team members.

And then, I'm sure it's no surprise that they asked, “Help me to grow.” In other words, provide them with a framework for individual development and make them feel confident in the all-important matter of promotion from within.

Why Flight Departments Lose Talent

On the flip side of the question of talent retention, we asked our survey respondents why they think organizations lose good people.



It probably comes as no surprise that the number-one answer was due to attrition—that is, employees retiring.

But the second-highest response regarded compensation, the idea that an employee can go to another company and be monetarily rewarded at a much higher level.

And running close to that in importance, the lack of opportunity for growth in a particular organization.

Something else that we saw again and again in our responses was the issue of pilots taking job opportunities with the airlines.

As you likely know, many of our part 121 carriers provide defined compensation plans and more consistent schedules. And many airline jobs eliminate the need for relocation.

What Drives Employee Loyalty?

One survey area involved the question of employee loyalty and what drives it. Overwhelmingly, our respondents told us that it's their organization's culture that inspires their loyalty.

Part and parcel of that culture, is the issue of transparency—how open and communicative organizations are regarding the policies and conduct of the company or department.

Lastly to the question of what drives loyalty, our respondents said, again, that it's life/work balance and how their companies deal with that issue.

Best Practices to Engage Talent

The last issue I addressed with our bizav leaders at the conference was the question of what they do—or what they recommend be done—to engage talent in the workplace.

Their response was simple. They said that one-on-one meetings were the single-biggest factor in helping to promote and engage talent among team members.

And, they told us in no uncertain terms that they want one-on-one time, coaching and mentoring to help talent thrive and develop in an organization.

Also important to help engage talent, the respondents said, were team events and regular team meetings.

This should come as no surprise to anyone who understands what motivates team cultures and the individual contributors who comprise them.

So the survey revealed both some expected and unexpected responses regarding the hows and whys of creating “sticky” cultures in the bizav workplace.

Your Turn

Do you have some ideas or information regarding workforce talent retention that you'd like to share with us?

CREATING A “STICKY” CULTURE IN A “WIIFM” ENVIRONMENT

By Sheryl Barden

Thanks to social media vehicles like LinkedIn, it's a common occurrence to read about friends and colleagues who've just landed a great new job. Or gotten a new job title. Or added a new skill to their resume.

The grass often looks greener on the other side. And people might think “What's in it for me” (WIIFM) if I stay where I'm at?

As an aviation leader, you know it's true that your team members are constantly being reached out to and recruited.

So, how do you create a work culture or job environment in your organization that's “sticky”?

One that's designed and operated in such a way that the top aviation talent you've attracted to your flight department is happy to stay?

One thing is definitely true: with increasingly greater competition for pilots and aviation maintenance professionals, it's becoming harder to keep solid aviation talent from leaving.

Especially when aviation departments are structured in a rather flat organizational chart.

So, an important question is, just how do we meet some of your team members' career aspirations and goals when they get the sense that there's little room to grow?

On November 1st, I sat down with a panel of aviation leaders at NBAA's Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition to address these important work-related issues and more.



My panel of distinguished guests included Dan Williams of Wal-Mart, Milt Hobbs of JPMorgan Chase, Jennifer Alessio of HPE and Jim Bennett of Starbucks.

Together, in front of a standing-room-only audience, we talked candidly about employee retention challenges—and how to solve them.

Each panelist shared his or her own best practices on how their flight departments attract top talent, retain them and build a sustainable, enviably “sticky” culture.

I also shared some interesting results to survey questions from leading aviation directors.

The results answered such questions such as:

What are the top things that help you attract talent?

How do you keep your team members engaged?

Why top employees leave?

So just what do aviation personnel need from their employers?

According to results, they want to:

- Be heard and have influence in decision-making.
- Work for a reputable brand and employer.
- Have stability coupled with work/life balance (or at least a “known” schedule).
- Receive continuous feedback from their managers.
- Be able to take advantage of personal development and mentoring opportunities.
- And, not surprisingly, they want stability and very competitive compensation and benefits packages.

These are just a smattering of the highlights.

But the session yielded many more valuable tips and findings for you.

And on a final note, if this topic of creating a “sticky” work culture is something you’d like assistance with, I’m more than happy to discuss these takeaways with your aviation organization, as well as with your HR partners.

Please feel free to reach out to me so we can put a meeting date on the calendar.

TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL BIZAV SCHEDULER

By Colleen Kelly

The role of an aircraft scheduler is often a complex one, involving a myriad of responsibilities well beyond the actual scheduling of the aircraft.

Whether a scheduler's role is filled by a single professional or a team of them, it's an important function, often viewed as the "eyes and ears" of the flight department.

In a smaller flight department, a scheduler is often autonomous, independent and largely self-directed. In many cases the scheduler is the only one at the hangar, he or she likely won't require a great deal of coaching or oversight.

This professional is often the go-to person for the aviation director, maintenance chief and/or chief pilot, so

they're fully aware of what's happening in the department.

Oftentimes, a scheduler is the point person for several upper-level executives in the company, including the CEO or Chairman's executive assistant, the high-net-worth owner or the Family Office lead.

As might be expected, a scheduler often wears many hats.

Depending on the organization's size, he or she might be responsible for many administrative tasks, including sorting the mail, organizing the stockroom, bringing in food for the staff meeting, etc.



According to our industry colleague Jim Lara, principal at Gray Stone Advisors: "The biggest challenge for a scheduler is the constant, frenetic pace. They need to handle multiple, unrelated tasks simultaneously, each with a very high priority."

How to Attract a Top Scheduler:

- Explain how your department is set up for success. For example, are you using robust scheduling software?
- Let candidates know the expectations for the role outside of scheduling responsibilities.
- Explain the onboarding and training process before they're considered fully qualified.
- Outline the employment schedule and whether flexibility is required. Does the job rotate among a scheduling team?
- Let candidates know about advancement opportunities and ongoing training.

Traits of a Successful Scheduler

Communication skills

The ability to clearly communicate with all levels of people—via phone, email and face-to-face—is key.

A scheduler will interact with aviation leadership, flight crew, maintenance, executive travelers, an aircraft owner, aviation industry vendors (e.g., FBOs and trip-planning companies) as well as the hospitality industry.

Confidence and calm demeanor

Depending on the operation, a scheduler's role can often be intense, requiring last-minute travel changes and/or “big personalities” who require top-notch service.

Therefore, one's feathers cannot be easily ruffled. Schedulers need to project confidence, maintain a calm demeanor and deliver efficiently on the smallest details.

Language proficiency

It's important to speak and write fluently in English (the language of aviation), but it's a bonus if the scheduler can speak one or two additional languages, such as French, Italian or Spanish.

Proficiency in geography

It goes without saying that a scheduler must be knowledgeable of airport locations and frequent travel destinations. S/he must also be able to coordinate travel details for the flight crew.

Tech-savvy

This role is highly computer-based. You've got to have great keyboarding skills and it's helpful to be open to embracing new technology.

Financial management

It's important to be able to manage both time and costs while adhering to the aviation budget and expense needs.

Trainable

Although a license isn't required for a scheduler position, there are initial and recurrent certifications available that demonstrate one's passion and interest in lifelong learning.

Knowledge of aviation regulations

The FAA and other governing bodies have strict regulations regarding flight crew requirements and flying times. It is the responsibility of the flight crew scheduler to assess crew coverage and adhere to these rules.

Strong organizational skills

An aircraft scheduler maintains the flight crew and cabin crew schedule, so flawless record-keeping skills are needed to manage and track important documents.

Flexibility

A scheduler needs to be flexible, and capable of working within a non-tradition schedule. It's especially true if the corporate flight department or aircraft owner has 24/7 travel needs.

That might mean working variable days and hours, including nights, weekends and holidays.

Recruiting Methods

- Recruit from aviation schools – Start with summer interns.
- LinkedIn can help, as well as your own personal network.
- Use your relationship at the Fixed Base Operators (FBOs).
- Network at the annual Schedulers & Dispatchers conference.
- Work with an aviation recruiter.
- Recruit internally from the executive assistant pool, with candidates who have fallen in love with aviation.

Typical Staffing

Two or more schedulers are usually needed for a 24-hour business aviation operation.

If you have two or more schedulers, you typically have one based at the hangar (doing shift work), with the support person (or persons) often on call.

Since schedulers largely work via computer, it makes telecommuting easier.

In fact, at API we're finding more and more that schedulers can work from home if they have an appropriate office setup. Some schedulers even work remotely, from another state than the one where the hangar is located.

When does a department need both a scheduler and dispatcher? It depends on the organization's needs.

About 50 percent of the large corporate aviation operations that we support at API also employ licensed dispatchers.

It just so happens that companies that operate a fleet of aircraft, fly overseas or have especially complex travel requirements often employ FAA-licensed dispatchers in addition to a scheduler.

It's important to note that, while there may be many overlaps between a scheduler's and a dispatcher's duties, a scheduler's role is typically more administrative, while a dispatcher's is often more technical, with knowledge of meteorology, aerial navigation, air traffic control procedures and other procedural aspects of aviation.

Scheduler Certification

Although it's usually not required, there does happen to be a certification course for aircraft schedulers.

In fact, FlightSafety International offers an initial and recurrent NBAA Scheduler Professional Development Program (NBAA-SPDP), which focuses on the safety and efficiency aspects of a flight operation.

During the course, students will review aviation terminology, effective communication, Crew Resource Management (CRM), and the basic elements of a Safety Management System (SMS).

Also included is a "fly-along" experience in a state-of-the-art flight simulator, to enhance the learning process.

Upon successful course completion, participants will be issued what's called a Certification of Completion.

Schedulers-Turned-Dispatchers

One of the many career paths for schedulers is to move into an aircraft dispatcher role.

To achieve this, schedulers can take a five- or six-week dispatcher course through FlightSafety, Jeppsen or other providers.

Dispatcher certification training ensures that students can demonstrate extensive knowledge of meteorology and of aviation in general (this level of knowledge is comparable to an Airline Transport Pilot certificate).

Want to work with API?

At API, we're always looking to add to our pool of qualified schedulers. If you've not yet done so, please submit your application online here and become a API Registered ProfessionalTM.

+ *Team Development & Recruiting*

6 Signs You Need Help with Aviation Recruiting

Creating Alignment with HR: Describing the Complexities of Bizav

Hiring the Right Bizav Pro, Part I

Hiring the Right Bizav Pro, Part II: Onboarding

How Efficient is Your Aviation Recruiting Process?

9 Tools Every Bizav Hiring Manager Needs

API Turns 45: Barden Reflects on People-related Changes

02

6 SIGNS YOU NEED HELP WITH AVIATION RECRUITING

By Colleen Kelly



One might ask, why do hiring managers contact API? What's their rationale?

Oftentimes, it's because they need help with their aviation recruiting needs and have exhausted all other options on their end.

So, I'd like to share an experience that might hit a familiar chord with some of you.

An aviation director recently called us at API in need of advice.

As he described it, his Part 91 flight department had recently lost one pilot to the airlines and another to a bizav organization, mainly due to compensation.

So he went ahead and posted his two positions externally.

The result was a whopping 300 resumes—half of them from retired airline captains and a quarter from job seekers who didn't meet the positions' requirements.

Shortly thereafter, he said that someone forwarded him a blog post written by API's CEO on the topic of pilot compensation.

That's when this director realized he needed help.



He got in touch with our team and briefly explained his situation, including locations, schedule demands, dual type rating requirements and the compensation plan his organization currently has in place.

Based on the information he provided us, we told him that the position would be incredibly challenging to fill given the current market.

That is, unless his department was willing to make some adjustments to their requirements.

Understanding what was at issue, he requested further help.

“I need you to give me the tools to educate my leadership team,” he told us. “I want all of us to be able to figure out why we’re struggling, and will likely continue to struggle unless we make some changes. I need to help the team understand why it’s challenging to attract talent, especially with all of the requirements we currently expect. And I need to help them understand the competitive market for trained aviation talent.”

As a Leader, What Do I Do About this Issue?

At a recent industry meeting I attended, many aviation leaders expressed to me that a common challenge across the board for Part 91 operators is retaining talent. And so it goes for all types of roles in business aviation—not just piloting.

Educating your aviation reporting executive and your HR and internal recruiting partners is key. If they do not understand the competitive marketplace, and rely on what has worked in the past, it could likely be a long and bumpy road.

All of this leads to my main point today: If you’re ready to think outside the box—and if you’re having second thoughts about tackling an industry issue affecting more than just your department—it may be time to consider working with an outside partner.

So, following, are six points to consider when you’re trying to decide if you should get in touch with a professional firm like ours.

Access to Quality Talent

First of all, examine your hiring practices track record. Ask yourself, does it come easily due to your longevity in business aviation and the breadth of your network?

Do you know how to find and recruit employed candidates who aren’t looking at the job boards?

If you discover that your “friends and family” network of potential recruits is drying up, and you don’t have the in-house resources to mount a recruitment campaign, then it’s time to find a recruiter.

recruiter such as API can help give you access to in-demand talent who are still gainfully employed (and not merely those who are out of work and looking at the job boards).

Confidentiality

Although it's not an everyday occurrence, there are those occasions when hiring for an exclusive position might need to be handled in complete confidentiality.

When that's the case, recruiters like API that have the resources to do so are often asked to confidentially tackle search projects that are never listed on job boards.

Experienced Partner

Several directors I know say they don't need a recruiter because they've always handled it themselves in the past.

But why try and take on a job that you're not really well-suited for? Many of our clients come to realize that the complexities of recruiting simply aren't their strong suits.

If you're an aviation director and find yourself spending a great deal of your day working on bringing in new talent, retaining talent and onboarding, then it's time to work with a skilled aviation recruiter who can serve as your "experienced partner" in this endeavor.

In fact, you'll know you're ready for a recruiter when you are ready to bring in a trusted partner and offset the workload.

A recruiter will hear you loud and clear, listen to what your needs are, dive really deep into your culture and be your voice during the candidate search process.

Access to Key Information

If you're recruiting on your own, there are many questions that are "off limits" to ask a potential candidate.

I'm referring to those questions that you would like the answer to, but cannot or should not ask.

As professional recruiters, however, we are able to afford both candidates and hiring entities the transparency both want in order to make a "right fit" decision.

Our job is to paint a vivid picture of both the candidate as well as the job opportunity.

We have the ability to dig more deeply into a candidate's past and present in order to share more with a client about that person's cultural values and work experience, as well as other details. And we can answer questions about the client that a candidate wants to know but may be afraid to ask directly.

In sum, prior to a face-to-face interview with a candidate, a recruiter will be able to provide you and your candidates with more information than either of you would likely be capable of gathering on your own.

Return on Investment

Many flight departments try to rationalize not hiring a recruiter because they think it's too costly.

But if you're handling it on your own and finding that you're taking six months to bring someone on board, start to finish, and then you find that your candidates are jumping ship . . . well, it means that you've lost your investment.

Look at it this way: Even a "quick" job search can easily take three months or longer to complete.

The hiring process involves confirming commitment on the job requirements and the cultural needs; researching candidates; conducting two to three interviews; evaluating a candidate in a simulator; putting together a relocation package—and scheduling all of the above.

So your investment in the process includes:

- Your personal time to manage the hiring process from start to finish (often half of your overall time).
- Travel expenses for several candidates to attend an in-person job interview.

- Simulator evaluation expenses:

Simulator cost

Travel for the director, chief pilot and candidate

Time: coordination of up to three schedules (can take up to two weeks).

Salary and possible relocation

When you factor in all of these many facets of bringing a new hire on board, it's not difficult to understand why retaining a recruiter makes good sense practically and economically for your flight department.

Industry expertise

API has been in business aviation exclusively for 46 years, so we know our industry and its many, many nuances.

That's why we get calls from our clients and others on a daily basis that are general in nature, not involving a particular hire. With our deep background, we're able to provide insight.

Using an aviation industry recruiter makes sense from several standpoints—for the success of your operation, the well-being of your staff and, perhaps most important of all, to protect your budget and your investment.

If you have any questions or would like to share your own perspective on the need for and value of professional recruitment in today's aviation

CREATING ALIGNMENT WITH HR: HOW TO DESCRIBE THE COMPLEXITIES OF BIZAV

By Colleen Kelly



One of the most difficult tasks of a business aviation hiring manager is attempting to explain the unique complexities of the profession to his/her team—especially to the corporate HR representative, recruiter or a family office representative.

In a follow-up to Sheryl Barden's blog "Six Ways to Partner with HR," we're providing some pointers to help you communicate to your hiring partners understand what you do in business aviation.

We encourage you to show them how you're a bit different from the other departments within the organization.

Helping them to understand what a "day-in-the-life" is like, along with the regulatory aspects of aviation, will help strengthen your relationship with HR and other decision makers.

Plus, they'll be more knowledgeable about what it takes to become a bizav pilot, maintenance professional, scheduler, dispatcher and/or flight attendant.

Your Reason for Being

The number one point you'll want to communicate to your HR team and family office is business aviation's reason for being—that your team is ultimately here to serve the mission of the company or the principal.

This priority is all about ensuring alignment up, down and across the entire company spectrum.

To further that alignment and strengthen two-way communications, we suggest inviting your HR or recruiting partner to the hangar to literally observe the differences of the team in that environment.



Help them understand why hiring someone in aviation is different than hiring a senior accountant, a facilities employee or someone in sales and marketing.

Let them meet the team, see the plane, and try to help them recognize that operations is not a traditional nine-to-five “office.”

It's built of multi-million dollar assets, after all, and it's all about convenience for the traveler and operating scheduled flights.

That means that the full team won't always occupy the hangar during regular business hours. Instead, they might work early mornings, late nights and regularly on weekends and holidays.

Unique Paths to Business Aviation

One of the things you'll want to impart is how the team has a broad makeup, meaning that the aviation professionals will likely have very different paths before joining your team.

Each functional group will serve as its own microcosm, with unique regulatory requirements and training paths. Yet, the common denominator for anyone in the flight department is that they have a passion for aviation.

Following are some of the major distinctions we find among three main professional aviation categories:

Maintenance professionals

Turning wrenches might once have been a path to maintenance, but now it's about leveraging technology to fine-tune complex avionics and entertainment systems.

Maintenance professionals come to business aviation from various career paths, whether it's working for a Part 145 service center or an aircraft manufacturer.

They're highly paid technologists and, by the time they're working on private aircraft, they almost always have their Airframe & Powerplant (A&P) certification, and they often have their Inspection Authorization (IA) certificate from the FAA.

Explain these distinctions to your partners, so they understand why the maintenance role is so critical from a safety perspective. Tell them that the maintenance team works even when the aircraft is traveling, and that these professionals will be as busy during that time as when the aircraft is in the hangar. Let them know that in many cases, they're also required to work multiple shifts to support the a/c.

Pilots

It's important to explain that business aviation captains may have been through a number of jobs. For example, in order to meet the minimum number of flight hours to join a business aviation team, a captain, first officer or chief pilot must also have a varied background.

Some pilots come into business aviation with a military background and some start their pre-bizav careers as a flight instructor, which is a great way to “build time” in the cockpit.

There are also those who come into our industry having flown for a regional or main line carrier.

Unlike another professional who accumulates more than 2,000 hours after working full-time over the course of a year, it might take a pilot 10-12 years of regular flying to amass 4,000 hours of flight time.

Explain the difference between a Pilot-In-Command (PIC) and Second-In-Command (SIC), along with the connection between health and flying, and why a first-class or second-class medical certificate is important to their careers.

Schedulers

As you know, flight departments operating two or more aircraft commonly employ a scheduler or licensed dispatcher to process trip requests as well as all of the changes involved: time, passengers, ground services requests, etc.

It's important to explain to your hiring leaders that the scheduler function is vital to the aviation operation because they are the “hub” of the department.

They are the “eyes and ears” of the flight department, and many times are the only staff member (or team member) at the hangar, who serve as the key contact to the leader of operations.

This detail-oriented role, often performed by former executive assistants, will interface with various departments, including maintenance, the flight deck and the cabin crew.

They wear many hats, are very process-oriented and are very comfortable with the customer-service aspect of business aviation.

It's Okay to be Different!

So, to recap, you should schedule a meeting between the key stakeholders and the HR team. In that meeting you should have the following objectives:

- Explain your aviation organizational chart with its different titles, roles and reporting structures.
- Share your vision, mission and values, and how they relate to corporate or family/private key stakeholders.
- Explain that pilot and maintenance training is a regulated part of aviation—not something that can be cut for budget reasons.
- Offer to take them to an NBAA convention or to a local business aviation safety day/regional event at your field.

- Suggest that they network with their HR peers who support other flight departments, in order to learn best practices in compensation, benefits, training and recruitment.
- Invite your HR partner to visit the hangar for a “day-in-the-life,” to see the aircraft and work on developing a good relationship with the team.

Your Turn

By now, you realize that effective communication skills are a cornerstone of almost every corporate function—including within the HR and aviation departments.

With so much riding on communication, it makes sense to put more thought and effort into honing our skills and interacting much more closely than we have in the past with our HR points of contact.

What are some of the ways you help to explain to your partners the unique qualities of your flight department?

HIRING THE RIGHT BIZAV PRO: PART I

By Sheryl Barden and Jim Lara

Hiring the most ideal, best-suited business aviation professional is no easy task.

It requires merging a great cultural fit with superior skills and an attitude focused upon the organization's success. And you must do this all while subordinating your own ego in favor of the entire organization's success.

In the first of our two-part series, I collaborated with my friend and aviation industry colleague, Jim Lara, Principal and Founder of Gray Stone Advisors.

Together, we take a “deep dive” into the best approaches when making a great hire and ensuring that the person is the right fit.

When beginning the search for ‘Mr. or Ms. Right-Fit,’ answer these challenging questions before you start:

- Just what will success look like for the candidate and the organization?
- What would failure look like?
- What are the early warning signs?
- How will our flight department measure up to the new hire's performance standards (or expectations)?
- What will our new hire have demonstrated and/or accomplished during the first 6 months to meet our expectations?
- Will the current members of the organization support this success or will they challenge or sabotage it, either consciously or unconsciously?



Two Keys for Aviation Hiring Managers: Focus and Listen

During the recruiting process, ensure that you are focusing on each professional for what he or she really is, as opposed to what you wish they would be.

If you're the aviation hiring manager, your job is to listen — and more importantly hear — what's being said (as well as what's not being said).

Listen not only to what the candidate says, but also to what other interviewers and industry colleagues have to say regarding their interactions with the candidate.

Recruit for Fit and Attitude, Train for Skill

Look for candidates that have both the right fit and attitude. Unfortunately, development of these two attributes together can rarely be achieved. Technical skills are another matter entirely. They can be taught given the appropriate level of intelligence and learning capacity.

It is absolutely critical that candidates and their qualifications are carefully and independently vetted. The aviation hiring manager should explore and verify every fact that will materially influence the success or failure of the candidate chosen for the position at hand.

Hiring mistakes can prove to:

- Be hugely expensive
- Take years to unwind
- Permanently damage the professional careers of both the hiring manager and the candidate, as well as other members of your organization.

4 Things to Do Pre-Interview

Clearly document the business aviation job description

This helps you determine if the candidate is a right fit. There are many online templates available that can assist in this task.

Whichever approach you take, make sure you clearly define and describe the characteristics that will determine if the 'fit' is correct—for the candidate as well as for the aviation organization.

An incompatible fit is the largest root cause of recruiting failures.

Request that HR play a key role

Your HR partner doesn't need to become the technical subject matter expert (you will already be filling that role), but be sure to collaborate with them in the creation of the job description and questions that will be addressed during the screening process and interview(s).

Define what's needed

With each performance level comes a price tag. Also, be realistic. Is there growth potential? If not, job satisfaction for the new hire can quickly erode. If this is more of a 'B-level' role, hire a great 'B' player. But be careful not to expect 'A-Player' performance if you end up hiring B-level talent.

Involve the aviation team

In areas where collaboration (teamwork) is a prerequisite to stellar outcomes, individuals in similar roles should be involved in the interview process.

Panel interviews are excellent, but only if the interviewers know their role and the process. Who will be the final decision-maker and how much input will the panel have? It's best to know that all questions are carefully constructed, and that the decision-making process is clearly defined in advance.

And remember, it's generally a poor practice to have subordinates participate in the selection process for their new supervisor, manager or senior leader.

When to Compromise on Skills Vs. Attitude: The Tradeoffs

It's important that, during the process of hiring the ideal professional, you know when to compromise on skills/ experience versus attitude. We suggest prioritizing them in the this order:

Personal and/or professional integrity.

If either are suspect, pass immediately. It's always best to trust your gut instinct.

Positive, professional and collaborative attitude.

A good attitude cannot be taught. If the right attitude composition for

your organization does not exist in the candidate, then the fit will ultimately be poor.

If you anticipate a bad fit, don't put yourself through the grief and pain of a bad hire.

This assumes, of course, that your organization's performance is driven by positive, professional and collaborative attitudes. As strange as this may sound, many organizations are not built on that belief system.

Experience and skills.

Both are teachable and transferable through a variety of means. Skills may involve training, which will be a budgetary item.

Experience, however, is a developmental item that usually requires high-quality mentoring in order to achieve the richest outcomes in the most compressed time frames.

Trust, but Verify

Reference checking can be a touchy subject. First, there are all the conventional avenues such as calling prior employers, but this has limited value in the non-commercial aviation world since there is so little that a former employer can answer due to legal constraints.

Then, there are the references provided by the candidate themselves.

This can prove to be much more fertile ground. Ask very open-ended questions designed to solicit 'essay-type' answers, but be careful not to go too far.

It's best to leave reference checking to employment professionals.

Third, take advantage of the plethora of public records that exist. Look at the FAA database and LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other online searches for information attributed to the candidate.

LinkedIn, in particular, can give you a good picture of how the candidate presents himself or herself to the world. Examine the tone and content of the candidate's postings on these sites and ensure they are consistent with the discussions that you have had with this individual.

Remember, you can't do it all yourself, and this is one area of your job where you don't have to worry about bringing in outside resources to assist.

A specialized business aviation recruiter (such as those at API) can perform all of these tasks, keeping you and your company at an arm's length from the candidates throughout the entire vetting process.

The search provider will generally dig much deeper, and assess the candidate's soft skills and personality to validate your assumptions. Using a specialized headhunter can reduce your hiring risk to near zero.

About our Guest Blogger:

Jim Lara is the principal and founder of Gray Stone Advisors, a consulting firm that helps aircraft operators and executives simplify the business of business aviation. With more than 12,000 flight hours, he has led the turnaround of corporations as well as major flight departments. To read more blogs by Jim and his team, visit GrayStoneAdvisors.com

HIRING THE RIGHT BIZAV PRO: PART II, ONBOARDING

By Sheryl Barden and Jim Lara



In the first of our business aviation hiring series, my colleague Jim Lara and I examined the best approaches to take when making a great hire and ensuring that the candidate is the right fit.

As a follow up, we share post-hire onboarding strategies and tactics to help ensure that your newly acquired aviation professional survives (and prospers) during their first 90 days.

After the decision is made to hire the best candidate, and the offer has been accepted, an effective onboarding strategy is the next key.

And it's something that must be in place before the new hire arrives on day one.

Following are ways to get started with your onboarding plan:

Designate a Mentor

At the very onset in larger organizations, a mentor should be chosen to guide the new hire (mentee) through the corporate maze of paperwork and procedures.

This person will also introduce the new team member to everyone in the organization and help him/her to settle in during the onboarding process.

Determine Training vs. Development

You will already have a very good idea as to what the new hire needs in terms of both training and development.

So the next step is to develop a calendar of major training and development milestones, as well as some specific role-related performance objectives for the first 30, 45, 60 and 90 days.

This approach will provide the new hire with a very clear road map, as well as setting the professional performance cadence expected by the business aviation organization.



Communicate Effectively

There's no such thing as over communication during this critical period. During the first two weeks of employment, the new hire and his/her mentor should talk daily, at minimum.

For the remainder of the onboarding period, host meaningful weekly communications to assess the level of organizational assimilation as well as address issues quickly and thoroughly. Set direction and cadence, leaving as little to chance as possible.

Get the Family Onboard

When it comes to onboarding, don't just stop with the new hire. Consider his or her family as well.

Often times, flight departments will relocate an entire family to a new town and then send the Mom or Dad to an aircraft initial training course for as long as 3-4 weeks.

This leaves a spouse fending for him/herself in a new community, perhaps with children at home and no support network to turn to.

One of the keys to the new hire's success is the support of family members. If the new hire's family transition isn't going well at home, these issues may follow him or her back to the workplace.

Onboarding: The First 90 Days

Planning the course of the first 90 days is critical to ensuring long-term success of the newly hired candidate.

Don't rely on your memory to make sure your bases are covered. Make a list of the most important action items that the new employee should cover in the first three months.

These include:

- An initial introductory meeting with key executives
- Reviewing the recent IS-BAO audit
- Ensuring they read the SMS and then take a test to ensure the appropriate information was retained, including completion of the input forms
- Spending a day at headquarters
- Shadowing each role in the department
- Simulator training if certifications need to be updated
- Safety training (e.g., MedAire medical)
- This to-do list associated with each new hire should be constructed on a customized basis.

Setting Expectations

Just as defining the new position as discussed in the first part of this series is a collaborative process, so is setting expectations after the new employee has been chosen.

During the hiring process, you will have already discussed with the candidate the definition of success, the requisite skills and experiences, as well as your perception of the candidate's present position.

Alignment then needs to be developed between your assessment and that of the candidate. Once everyone is on the same page, then reasonable expectations can be established that are embraced by all stakeholders. There should be no surprises on anyone's part.

Managing Expectations

A business aviation leader should be emotionally and professionally invested in each member of his/her flight department.

When it comes to your new hire, use their "honeymoon period" as a way to not only set the expectations, but also manage those expectations by communicating often. Yes, even if it's uncomfortable performance-related information. Because the less frank and honest you are in the beginning, the harder it is to be honest in the future.

By reviewing performance levels early on, you'll be doing your new hire a favor. In fact, don't limit honest feedback to just the new guy or gal. Make sure you're talking to each of your team members on a regular, frequent and candidly honest basis to ensure that there are never any surprises.

"Houston, We Have a Problem"

If something feels awry during or after the honeymoon phase, everyone involved (including the underperformer) knows that there's a problem.

All eyes will be on how you handle the situation. Acting with courage, fairness, dignity and empathy is always the best approach.

If you handle the situation poorly, your reports may then question why they should follow you in the future. Remember that people chose who they follow, not the other way around.

Wrong Choices Can Happen

Sometimes, decisions made with the best of intentions, turn out to be the wrong ones and sometimes the candidate you thought was ideal for the position, was not as perfect as originally perceived.

At the end of the day, the tragic mistake is not hiring the wrong person—it's keeping them. When a mistake is made, cut your losses quickly, learn the lessons and move on. There is absolutely no justification for keeping the wrong person.

The impact of having a wrong person in an organization can be devastatingly negative. The employee is miserable; work is not getting done; others have to pick up the slack and everyone is “talking” about the situation.

So, when it's clear that the situation cannot have a sustained, successful outcome, it's incumbent upon you, as the leader, to make the change.

Hiring the right business aviation professional is critical for any flight department. Putting procedures into place to identify the ideal candidate for a vacant position is the first step.

Part one of this two-part blog series touched on best practices to ensure that person is the right fit. Just as crucial is to ensure that the new hire flourishes during their first 90 days and thereby reconfirming that your first choice to fill this new position was the right one!

About our Guest Blogger:

Jim Lara is the principal and founder of Gray Stone Advisors, a consulting firm that helps aircraft operators and executives simplify the business of business aviation. With more than 12,000 flight hours, he has led the turnaround of corporations as well as major flight departments. To read more blogs by Jim and his team, visit GrayStoneAdvisors.com

At a recent aviation industry golf tournament in Minnesota, someone asked me a great question.

I wish I had had a more definite answer. The best one I could offer him is: "It depends."

But in this market, the tighter the timeline, the better.

Here at API, we've seen a variety and combination of things that work.

- Phone screen
- On site visits from 1-2 days
- 30-minute meeting with individuals
- Lunches with team
- Simulator evaluation
- Ride-alongs
- Panel interviews

But whatever your aviation recruiting process entails, it needs to be airtight and reflect that brand that you're selling.

Why?

Because your hiring process is a direct reflection of your company.

Remember, the interview itself is a “courting” process. The candidate is trying to “woo” you, the hiring manager, and you should be doing the same with them.

But if you don't know how to “sell the sizzle” (e.g., your brand, culture, and reputation), you're missing the boat.



Are you really aware what would make you a compelling employer—and then be able to back it up? What is the talent looking for in the market? You can't be competitive if you don't know your audience.

If your flight department is known for offering a strong work/life balance, be prepared to discuss with your candidates scheduling and hard days off, or the benefits your company offers to support that aspect of your culture.

When possible, be specific, and certainly don't make promises that can't be kept or you'll be back in a hiring scenario sooner than you think.

We find that one of the common key attributes of our clients that have the highest talent retention rates is *transparency*. And transparency means openly discussing what works well and what can be improved—both with existing *and* prospective talent.

However, you get to the candidates that you're going to vet—be it working with a recruiter or using your recruiting partners—the questions you should ask are: How long should it take? And what should it look like?

You can start to build your hiring process by identifying what your priorities are when you're identifying new talent.

Some critical points to consider are:

- Is it important that you have more than one opinion?
- Do you feel the need to test technical proficiency for pilots or offer maintenance professionals some time to work amongst prospective teammates?
- Do you find value in non-managerial members of the team casting a vote?
- Do potential employees need to meet with HR and/or executives/principals?

Once you've identified what brings the most value to your process, you can begin to establish a timeline.

If at all possible given the competition and fluidity of this market, three weeks from interview to offer is a sound goal.

If your process is going to take longer due to circumstances beyond your control, simply explain that to the candidate.

Typically, a candid discussion about timeline and expectations can ease fallout caused by a longer than average hiring process.

If you have multiple candidates vying for the same position, make sure your communication with each is consistent and delivered when promised.

If you're courting a top-notch professional, they are going to expect the same level of professionalism in return; that means keeping your commitments to them and following through.

It's also wise to share with candidates of choice what the process will entail should they be provided an offer, i.e., a background check (which may take two weeks), a drug screen, a physical, references from them, and so on.

Sharing these details will let the candidate plan accordingly (when giving notice to their current employer, for example).

Finally, when you've chosen your candidate, they've signed the offer and you're on your way, *do not* forget to follow up with the candidates who weren't chosen.

There is real value in following through with those who make it to the final round but don't clench the position.

Remember, you may end up calling on them somewhere down the road, or they might show up as a peer someday.

We all know this is a small industry, so don't underestimate the importance of following through—and following up—with your second and third choices.

And, if they ask for it, don't be afraid to provide them with feedback. It's okay to explain that it simply wasn't a fit, or that their experience wasn't as strong as the candidate you chose.

We're all professionals—it's okay to say no as long as you explain why.

To recap, remember to identify what brings value to your aviation recruiting process.

Then build your timeline around those needs, communicate to candidates during the entire process and follow through with everyone, including those not chosen.

Need further help?

If you'd like assistance with your next recruiting project, contact our team and we'd be glad to walk you through API's retained recruiting process.

9 TOOLS EVERY BIZAV HIRING MANAGER NEEDS

By Sheryl Barden

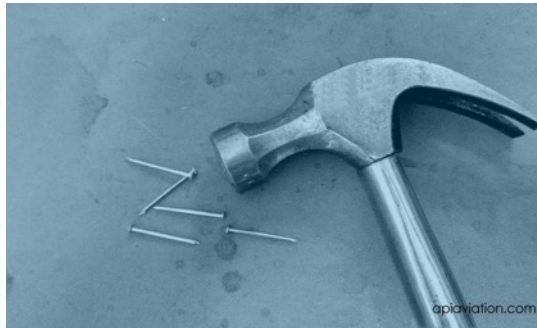
Finding and using “the right tool for the job” is a bit of advice that’s as accurate as it is old.

And it doesn’t only apply to the working trades, like carpentry or plumbing; it’s equally applicable when you’re talking about the right tools, techniques and strategies to help you screen and hire job candidates more successfully.

Here at API, over four decades of successful experience identifying, assessing and recommending new hires for our clients has taught us a lot about what works and what doesn’t.

We enjoy the great advantage of having tried and proven many strategies to put the right person in the right job, time and again.

So, as a hiring manager, what tools should you have in your arsenal?



Here, in no particular order, are nine that we know will absolutely help.

LinkedIn Profile

Take a good look at your profile. Is it crafted in such a way that it lets jobseekers know that you’re a leader in your industry whom team members want to follow? Is it up to date?

And are you using it to search for candidates? Are you reviewing the profiles of your top candidates?

How do they present themselves online (and in other social media profiles)?

It also helps to know what your own company is posting on LinkedIn so you can know what’s being said about the organization you represent.

Salary Surveys

Don’t fail to use salary surveys to research competing flight departments.

Get to know the compensation practices of other operators on your field as well as those in your operating category (e.g., other Global Express operators).

Wouldn’t it be impressive to prospective employees if you could benchmark your compensation package against the competition?

For example, it would be extremely attractive to new hires if you can pay 25% more than the average range for Global captains in your area.

Glassdoor.com

Glassdoor.com is one of the largest and fastest growing job and recruiting websites in use today. Check out what's being said about your company online so that you can be prepared to respond to questions that might arise.

Aviation Recruiting Experts

A recruiter such as API can help you to professionally assess your culture, your hiring needs, your compensation package needs and much more.

In fact, an outside recruiter can often help you make a decision between using internal and external candidates.

Companies like API provide an objective opinion and fully vet both passive candidates (those with jobs) and active ones who are looking for a new role. It's a recruiter's job to know who's who so that the best candidates that meet your organization's needs rise to the top of your list.

Job Descriptions

Our friends at Gray Stone Advisors have outlined exactly what should go into your aviation-specific job descriptions. Make sure to review what are the keywords and phrases included in job descriptions that will help your HR partners to more effectively select candidates and profile resumes.

Strategic Planning

Ensuring that your aviation organization is aligned with corporate (or the high-net-worth individual) requires communication with your reporting executive as well as some strategic planning on your part. What are your client's travel needs in 2016 and beyond?

How are you creating value for your parent company now, and how might their needs change over time? For example, if your firm plans to expand national locations (or even go into new international markets), a new aircraft may need to be in your strategic plan.

Planning for the short- and long-term will help you determine budgetary and headcount needs.

Additionally, if you have pending retirements in the next year or two, you will need a succession plan.

Your HR Partners

It's always a good thing to recognize the importance of being aligned with your HR colleagues, and build a solid communication with them to make them aware why aviation is so different, in so many respects, from other departments.

Evaluation Plans

Never underestimate the importance of developing a comprehensive plan for candidate evaluation. Here at API, we call them a hiring scorecard.

Who will candidates see, why will they see them and for how long?

What should each interviewer attempt to learn from candidates (e.g., skills, culture, communication style, etc.)

Remember: the more consistent one is in how he or she evaluates, the better the decisions that will be made. Make sure everyone in the process is fully committed.

Company Culture

Lastly, make sure you know your company's culture and mission forwards and backwards, and be able to clearly articulate it. How does the aviation department contribute to its overall success? The key to success for attracting and retaining talent is to ensure you get the cultural fit right.

In summary, as simple an analogy as it might seem, I hope I've made the point that a "toolbox" can have more in it than mere

API TURNS 45: BARDEN REFLECTS ON PEOPLE-RELATED CHANGES

By Sheryl Barden



Since the anniversary of our founding, the API team has been marveling at the fact that we've been serving the business aviation industry for an amazing 45 years!

That milestone has given us pause for a little reflection.

If we can claim the experience of 45 years as a learning process, one thing we know is how important a decision to hire someone for an aviation organization is.

After all, the candidate must be many things: technically proficient, safety-minded, highly experienced and, last but not least, well-equipped to live a different lifestyle than that required of other industries.

Working in business aviation is not for everyone, as we well know, and that's why hiring managers have turned to API find the best possible cultural fit for their organizations.



Growth and Change

As we celebrate our 45th year in business, exclusively serving the business aviation industry, a lot has changed.

Following are some of the more notable developments we've observed (in no particular order of importance):

In 1971, when API got its start, flight departments ran themselves and carried their own checkbooks.

There were virtually no questions asked and little oversight from corporate. As you can imagine, there also was scant technology to help corporate keep tabs on the on the flight team at the airport hangar.

What's more, there were many fewer HR policies and much less financial scrutiny. Procurement departments were not involving themselves in aviation. We didn't have Sarbanes-Oxley nor all of the 10Ks that are now required for shareholders.

- Up until 10 or 15 years ago, a business aircraft was used to get executives from point A to point B, but, it was a much more glamorous experience—often considered a “perk.”

Nowadays, flying privately is much more about a safe and secure means of giving passengers time to be more productive while they’re in the air.

Flying is a competitive tool that enables executives to meet customers, make deals quickly and/or reach multiple remote locations within one day.

- The corporate flight department is no longer viewed as the “royal barge” at the hangar.

We’ve seen corporations rely less on cabin attendants and, instead, some corporations have transformed the role into flight technicians who have a dual function: customer service and maintenance.

We’ve also seen companies eliminate alcohol from many flights and serve box lunches instead of more elaborate “white tablecloth” meals.

- Back in the day, a trip to Europe—and particularly Asia—required much more planning; it was a far longer process of preparation.
- International trip planning has come a long way in 45 years, as has technology.

- One major change that we’ve seen in the past few decades is corporate oversight of flights and flight activity. No longer does an aviation department only report directly to the CEO or Chairman. Now it’s much more common for the aviation organization to report to an executive who may not even be on the Senior Leadership team.
- We’re seeing flight departments that have been around for multiple decades merging with other companies.
- They’re also choosing “supplemental lift” partners with charter and fractional aircraft operators. And some are outsourcing to aircraft management companies.

- There's a bigger emphasis on aviation leaders and pilots having a college degree and bringing more business skills to leadership roles. It's very common for aviation directors to now have MBAs and CAM certifications; and they're not flying as much as they're managing a business within a business.
- These high-level professionals are working more and more with their partners at headquarters, developing fleet plans and making strategic decisions. They're also required to recruit a diverse team and help them grow.
- We're seeing a new "WIIFM" culture with aviation employees. No longer do people remain employed with one company for their entire career

It's often the case that people move every two to five years, which is why finding the right cultural fit has become so important.

- Attracting new talent and rewarding them appropriately have become more difficult. Aviation departments need to find new ways to keep their team members feeling valued via development opportunities, cross-functional training and the opportunity to grow into a new role
- Diversity is a much bigger concern, especially from an HR standpoint.

More women and other, diverse candidates are in the market, but it's still quite a low percentage overall.

I recall a conversation with several of the "greatest generation" who said that, in their day, they could

hire anyone they wanted, and if they only wanted to hire married white men, that was accepted.

Now, as we all know, our flight departments are expanding their hiring horizons, and welcoming people of all genders, races, ethnicities and sexual orientations.

Whew. That's a lot of evolution! Yet, over the past four and a half decades, one thing that I can tell you that's never wavered: **Business aviation is not about planes, "It's about peopleTM."**

Here at API, it's been our privilege to serve this industry we dearly love.

And, even after 45 years, it remains exciting, challenging, unpredictable and always worthwhile.

During this time, we have been privileged to work with thousands of aviation professionals, and honored to support some of the biggest brands in business, as well as some of the most exclusive private families.

The API team knows that what we do impacts people's lives, and we embrace that responsibility with some reverence.

And, we'd be remiss if we didn't dedicate our 45th year to our founder, Janice K. Barden, who was an aviation pioneer from Day 1.

Your Turn

We've outlined a few people-related changes we've observed in the business aviation industry over the past few decades. What changes have you witnessed?

+ *Succession Planning*

*Building Bench Strength:
An 8-Step Guide to Succession Planning*

6 Steps to Planning for your Successor

How to Mine for Aviation Talent

03

BUILDING BENCH STRENGTH: AN 8-STEP GUIDE TO SUCCESSION PLANNING

By Sheryl Barden



Grooming members of your business aviation team to take over your job is a hallmark of great leadership. A true mark of leadership is having the foresight to engage in some serious succession planning.

That's right—having the vision to understand that you, yourself, won't be in your leadership position forever, and thus taking the initiative to seek out people within your business aviation organization who have the fundamentals to fill your shoes when you move on.

And whose shoes need readying to fill?

Following is a list of leadership roles in aviation operations.

If you're among them, as a function of your leadership, you should be thinking about populating your 'bench' with potential successors for your job.

1. Aviation Reporting Executive
2. VP of or Director of Business Aviation
3. Maintenance Director
4. Flight Operations Manager
5. Chief Pilot
6. Aviation Safety Manager
7. Scheduling Manager
8. Dispatch Manager
9. Lead Flight Attendant



As a first step, if it's at all possible, it's important to identify candidates from within your own flight department to take over the reins.

Finding people in-house will help ensure that there's a continuity of culture, values and institutional knowledge—all three of which are vitally important to limit disruption to the department and help maintain the overall status quo under new leadership.

But tapping someone on the shoulder and letting him or her know you want them to succeed you is just the tip of the iceberg.

There's a lot more that goes into true succession planning.

First of all, although you might have someone in particular in mind for succession, it's a much better idea to avoid 'anointing' one individual and, instead, groom two or even three employees for a top leadership role.

The old adage about putting all your eggs in one basket is particularly applicable here. For one thing, preparing two or more potential candidates for a top role can have some surprising outcomes.

During the grooming process, you just might discover that your second or third choice has risen to the challenge far beyond your expectations. So 'number three' might turn into your 'number one' candidate.

It Takes a Village

As a leader in business aviation, it's critical to understand that effective succession planning can't occur in a vacuum; there has to be some infrastructure in place to support the process.

Your entire organization must embrace the concept in philosophy and practice.

This is where your HR department can be of vital assistance—as a part of the employee development process, your HR partner should engage a leadership readiness metric or some other measure of preparedness for greater roles and responsibilities in the company.

HR can also help prepare employees for succession by making various professional development tools available to them.

Encouraging individual team members to attend industry events outside their own organization can be extremely valuable, for instance, as can enrolling them in professional development programs and online courses geared to leadership.

It's No Secret

A question often arises: what will it do to the other members of my team if they know that a select few people are being readied to lead them? Won't they find it discouraging?

On the contrary, many employee relations and HR specialists agree that acknowledging you have a successor (or successors) in mind can be a highly positive and motivational force in your department.

Once you've identified a couple of candidates you think have all the characteristics of a leader, letting others on your team know about it can help them aspire to the same upwardly mobile track their colleagues are on.

Working openly with your potential successors also provides you with the opportunity to better manage the impending change.

Making other company leaders outside your department aware of your plans (and which members of your team that you have in mind) will give them an opportunity to get to know your candidates, and help ensure a smoother working relationship during the transition.

Eight Ways to Succession Plan

So how do you get started? There are a number of steps you can take to get the succession-planning ball rolling.

- Talk to your HR partner and your immediate supervisor to make sure there's a supported succession path in place.
- Review all of your team's job descriptions to ensure that there are opportunities for development.
- Understand the necessary competencies at each leadership level. For example, coaching and delegation skills, professional image and demeanor, communication and interpersonal skills, education and an understanding of how to deal with organizational politics are all competencies to be developed to ensure successful leadership.
- Identify performance objectives that identify the tasks/activities and expected results for future advancement.
- Cross-train individuals in key performance areas to assess their scope and prepare them for wider responsibilities.
- Identify critical positions within the organization.
- Establish a succession plan for each leadership role.
- Outline a mentoring plan for each potential candidate.

Win-Win

Put all of this advice into practice and, as we hope you'll see, an important outcome of succession planning will be how well it demonstrates that your organization truly values and invests in its people.

By sharing your plan to eventually promote someone to your position, you're letting your team know that there's room to grow for everyone in the department.

6 STEPS TO PLANNING FOR YOUR SUCCESSOR

By Jennifer Steele

Sheryl Barden's previous blog aimed at getting the ball rolling so you can begin a formative plan to prepare successors for higher-level, "graduated" roles in your aviation organization.

Now, I'd like to turn again to this critical topic, and address some of the issues related to succession planning.

This time with a tighter focus on planning a replacement for YOUR OWN POSITION, and why it's so important both for you and your flight department.

First of all, it should come as no surprise that succession planning helps protect your flight department.

Why?

Because it ensures a smooth, relatively seamless transition from one leader—yourself or someone else—to the next.

Another NBAA article quoted Sheryl Barden, who emphasized the importance of finding succession candidates from inside your company as a means of, as she said, "investing in your people."

"It provides continuity of culture, values and institutional knowledge," she added.

But it's also a given that, as a manager, planning for your own successor is a big responsibility.



Filling your Shoes

I know what you're thinking. It might seem somewhat counter-intuitive to start prepping someone to fill your shoes—especially if you're content with your current position.

There's a territory issue at hand.

You might wonder how someone could ever manage to take over what you've spent a lot of blood, sweat and tears building.

Or you might not really want to think about what it means to leave your job.

Or perhaps you just don't want to spend the time on something right now that's not on the immediate horizon.

Developing and executing a succession plan can benefit you and your organization in some unlikely ways.

For one thing, it can positively affect your own career. If the leaders of your company realize that you have a well-trained and qualified successor ready and waiting in the wings to take your position, it might encourage them to move more quickly to advance you into that meaty new position you've been eyeing as your next step.

And another positive: if you're grooming someone to who can readily step into your role, it demonstrates to leadership a high level of confidence and maturity on your part.

6 Steps to Succession Planning

Here's a checklist to consider and tick off as you get underway finding and readying the next employee in the chain of succession for your job:

Create a job description

Start with your own job description, but expand on it by adding all the nuances that you've observed in the course of performing your job, adding in the soft skills a successor might need and the extra little tips that you think will aid someone functioning in your position.

Train incrementally

Don't think of successor training as a single "knowledge dump." Develop a strategy with a timetable and give it the time to work. For example, give a potential successor broad responsibility on projects but do it piecemeal, in increments, both for more effective training and to test their readiness in stages. And reach out to tap other resources; if your company happens to have a formal training program, for instance, make use of your training department.

Create milestones

As part of the incremental training mentioned above, create a set of "milestones for readiness" to give everyone a heads up when a likely successor for your job is ready. And don't forget to design your succession plan such that it complements your organization's overall strategic plan.

Don't clone yourself

It might be natural to gravitate toward someone just like you—but try and resist the impulse! Will having "another you" help your organization reach new heights? Think about it: organizations need different leadership styles at different times in their business life cycle.

Communicate your intentions

Don't let an upcoming transition catch your team unawares; let them know—gradually—what's coming down the pike.

Communicate with your team what you have in mind and help set their expectations. Have your replacement shadow you, and introduce him or her to other managers and team members.

Give your successor some space

Don't take it personally if he or she doesn't consult with you as frequently as you expect, or goes about his or her preparation a little differently than you thought. After all, they're trying to establish themselves in the job. Some people feel the best way to start a new position is to chart their own course.

Regardless if you're eyeing a new leadership position in your company or not, if you have some ideas about creating a succession plan for yourself, we'd love to hear from you!

HOW TO MINE FOR AVIATION TALENT

By Jennifer Steele

The subject of mining for aviation talent was a lively topic during a discussion I recently had with a group of business aviation maintenance leaders.

And just what does it mean to “mine for talent”?

Well, it’s about taking an inventory of each individual in your aviation organization—especially if you’re a leader responsible for retaining talent and perhaps one day planning for your successor.

It’s also about looking at what motivates each person, as well as identifying any of their hidden talents.

For instance, which of your team members are perfectly content coming to work, doing their job well and then going home?

Who among them strives to move beyond their position and into a leadership role of some kind?

In the simplest of terms, who on your team views their role as a “job” or “skilled trade” and who views it as a “career” with a desire to be groomed for advancement?

Who’s on your Team?

In addition to identifying the aspirations of your team members, it’s extremely important to determine what is most important to their quality of life.

Do you have a non-exempt employee trying to put a child through college, and would they appreciate the opportunity for overtime?



Do they want to be home for dinner on occasion because their spouse is busy managing their four small children?

Are they an introvert best suited for individual projects where they can work on their own?

Although you cannot necessarily cater to these wants and needs—and you have to work within the confines of budgets and schedules—you’d be amazed what loyalty and appreciation you receive for even the smallest of nods in this direction.

Acknowledgement of what's important to a team member, and the effort to meet his or her need, will repay itself tenfold.

Give “Talent” a Seat at the Table

In doing this important work, you may find the need to reexamine your aviation department's structure.

This is true especially when you're acknowledging the talent of someone within your group who aspires to a leadership role—and has the skills to support that desire.

Can you create a Crew Chief, Lead Pilot or Safety Manager position, for instance?

Or, if you haven't room for upward mobility and/or you don't have the budget to increase salaries or responsibilities, perhaps you can offer someone an opportunity to run an internship program, or participate on an advisory board of some kind.

Also, don't forget about NBAA committee opportunities available to them, in addition to any internal committees you can steer them toward.

Just Start the Conversation

If you simply can't provide any of the aforementioned suggestions, it's also acceptable to acknowledge a team member's desire to grow.

Let him or her know you would support that growth elsewhere if they find an opportunity for themselves—but only if you genuinely feel that way.

Although this may seem counter-intuitive, that type of openness fosters trust and growth. It also ensures that you're successfully developing a talent who is very likely going to give back to the industry and thank you all the while.

Remember when you're mining the talent on your team, it's not a “one size fits all” approach.

In fact, it's quite the opposite.

What we're doing is taking inventory of each team member and keeping a finger on the pulse of their motivators, as we potentially re-structure our team or identify a successor.

In closing, consider this: I've conducted hundreds of candidate interviews since I joined API, and I often discover that financial reward is far from their sole motivation.

Instead, many aviation professionals would rather achieve a certain quality of life, earn a new title or be given the opportunity to take on more responsibilities.

Sometimes you have to dig deep to uncover these motivators, so commit—and don't forget to bring your miner's hat!

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ABOUT API



Business Aviation: It's Not Just About Planes... It's About People

Aviation Personnel International (API) is the longest-running aviation recruiting firm, exclusively serving the hiring needs of flight departments in private and corporate aviation.

C-suite executives, talent search professionals and aviation leaders rely on us for our proven ability to match top caliber aviation professionals based on talent, skills, values, cultural fit, work history and industry references.

Since 1971, we've offered the broadest portfolio of fully vetted active and passive candidates for aviation leadership, including pilots and maintenance professionals, along with other aviation-specific roles.

Whether it's for a Fortune 500 corporation or private flight department, API offers comprehensive retained recruitment services, including talent identification, aviation staff development and outplacement services.



API'S FIVE PRACTICE AREAS



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Sheryl Barden, President & CEO

An aviation industry recruitment and talent identification veteran, Sheryl is a frequent guest speaker and author for several aviation organizations and publications.

She is particularly regarded for applying her extensive background in employee search, screening and coaching to fulfill aviation recruiting and human resource consulting needs.

To help API's clients attract and retain the level of talent they're seeking, Sheryl serves as a trusted advisor on HR-related matters, such as aviation hiring best practices and competitive compensation packages.

Sheryl joined API in 2001, as Vice President of Business Development, and she assumed the critical role of President in 2003. She added CEO responsibilities to her position in 2013.

API has grown exponentially under her leadership, while always remaining true to the company's founding principles of integrity, confidentiality and industry-leading client service.

Sheryl is an aviation industry thought leader on employment issues, such as the aviation talent shortage and pilot professionalism, and was a contributor at the NTSB's Safety Symposium, in response to the 2009 Colgan Air accident.

A member of the NBAA and its Board of Directors, Sheryl serves as Vice Chair of its Associate Member Advisory Council. Sheryl is also a member of the Society for Human Resource Management, Flight Safety Foundation, International Aviation Women's Association, Women in Corporate Aviation and International Women's Forum of Northern California. She is the past president of IWF NorCal.



Sheryl holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Management with an emphasis in Personnel Management from Pennsylvania State University, and a MBA from the McLaren School of Business, at the University of San Francisco.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Colleen Kelly, Vice President

Colleen works closely with business aviation hiring managers and their HR partners to best understand their unique business and talent needs. To fulfill the needs of API's clients, she thoroughly analyzes each candidate's skill set, values and experience to ensure an ideal cultural fit for every project.

Colleen applies her extensive background in employee search, screening and coaching to match business aviation organizations with the industry's top talent, ranging from aviation directors to maintenance directors, flight technicians and captains.

She joined API as Director of Candidate Services in 2007, and was promoted to her current role as Vice President in 2011. Throughout her tenure, she's coached hundreds of aviation professionals during their career transitions, including one-on-one mentoring sessions via API's outplacement service, "Your Best Foot Forward."

Prior to API, Colleen held a strategic, director-level position at a multibillion-dollar Fortune 500 company. During her seven-year tenure there, she had responsibility for the profitability of a global division with \$160 million in annual revenue.

A member of the NBAA, Northern California Business Aviation Association and Women in Corporate Aviation, Colleen has been a featured speaker on the topics of career development, personal branding and interviewing best practices.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Jennifer Steele, Director of Client Services

Jennifer brings more than a decade of business aviation industry expertise to API. Her proven track record of understanding clients' needs—combined with her unique ability to inspire confidence and build relationships—makes her an integral part of API's aviation recruiting team.

In her role as Director, Client Services, Jennifer works directly with API's client hiring managers to identify their professional and cultural needs and matches them with highly vetted, qualified candidates. She also helps strengthen API's relationships with its long-term clients and assists in business development opportunities.

Prior to joining API in 2015 as Director of Candidate Services, Jennifer served as a Senior Account Manager for MedAire, an International SOS company, where she gained significant leadership experience, developed key business relationships and honed her exceptional communication skills.

Jennifer is a member of the NBAA Maintenance Committee and is also a member of the Pacific Northwest Business Aviation Association and Women in Corporate Aviation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Nebraska.



CONTACT US



apiaviation.com
1.415.751.3250



LinkedIn:
Aviation Personnel
International



Facebook:
Aviation Personnel
International



Twitter:
@apiaviation

Thank You!

