

**Recruiting and Retaining Talent for Ground Handling:
The Key to Success in the Aviation Industry**

(Presented by Airport Services Association -ASA)

Introduction

In the fast-paced and complex world of airport operations, ground handlers play a vital role in ensuring the smooth flow of aircraft, passengers, and cargo. These skilled professionals are responsible for a range of tasks, including aircraft loading and unloading, baggage handling, fuelling, and marshalling. However, one of the significant challenges faced by ground handlers in recent years has been the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified personnel.

Several factors contribute to the hiring difficulties experienced by ground handlers. Firstly, the aviation industry has experienced a period of rapid growth, leading to increased demand for ground handling services. As airlines expand their fleets and open new routes, the need for proficient ground handlers has soared. This surge in demand has put considerable pressure on ground handling companies to find suitable candidates who possess the necessary skills, experience, and certifications.

Moreover, ground handling roles often require individuals to work irregular hours, including weekends, evenings, and holidays. The demanding nature of the job and the need for round-the-clock operations can deter potential candidates from pursuing a career in ground handling. Additionally, the physical demands of the job, such as heavy lifting and exposure to various weather conditions, can further limit the pool of available applicants.

To address these challenges and ensure a steady supply of qualified ground handlers, the Airport Services Association (ASA) has been asked by its members and the ground handling community at large to play a more prominent role. ASA is an industry association that represents ground handling companies and provides a platform for collaboration, advocacy, and professional development. By bringing together industry stakeholders, ASA aims to address common issues and foster an environment that supports the recruitment and retention of skilled ground handlers.

To find out more about ASA, please visit its website at: www.asaworld.aero or via the social media: www.linkedin.com/company/asa-the-airport-services-association

Recruitment Strategies

To attract talented individuals to the ground handling sector, the ASA can implement several strategies. Firstly, creating awareness among job seekers about the diverse career opportunities in ground handling is essential. Collaborating with educational institutions, organizing career fairs, or conducting awareness campaigns can help shed light on the benefits and potential for growth in this field.

Moreover, the ASA can establish partnerships with training centers and develop comprehensive training programs that equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge for ground handling roles. Offering scholarships and apprenticeship programs can incentivize potential candidates to pursue a career in this sector and encourage them to choose ground handling as a viable and rewarding option.

Another important aspect will be the creation of joint synergies with other sectors of air transport to promote the defense of work values that matter to (especially younger) employees. In this regard, ASA and ACI-World have announced in April 2023 that they will combine forces in the drafting of a high-level White Paper for the promotion of Decent Work at airports, a paper that the two associations hope will help create a precedent and a benchmark that both airports and ground handlers around the globe will want to match, and even surpass.

Retaining Talent

Retaining talented individuals within the ground handling sector is equally crucial. The ASA can collaborate with industry stakeholders to create a positive and supportive work environment that values employee well-being and growth. Implementing competitive compensation packages, performance-based incentives, and career development opportunities are effective measures to retain talent.

Furthermore, fostering a culture of continuous learning and providing ongoing training programs can enhance the skill sets of ground handling professionals, making them feel valued and motivated. Encouraging teamwork, recognizing outstanding achievements, and offering opportunities for advancement within the organization can also contribute to higher employee satisfaction and loyalty.

The recognition of people's skills is central. Yet, there exists today no cross recognition of company provided training for the workforce in ground handling. By establishing a robust process for any organisation who provides accredited training to their employees or indeed the training of others in ground handling this may take a step forward into the future.

An employee receiving training from an ASA accredited organization will gain a qualification which has mutual recognition between other ASA accredited organisations. This has the opportunity for any new employer to accept this "task training" and not repeat it, so giving the person with aviation experience and skills a higher likelihood of remaining in the industry and giving the employer the possibility to avoid additional training time with a person already competent.

Beyond these two attributes which we can all appreciate, there lies a greater benefit to the entire sector, steering ground handlers toward the globally harmonized standards contained within the IATA AHM as a baseline for training standards. This promotes a move toward greater harmonisation of standards globally.

The ASA Training Accreditation Program (ATAP) will recognize a training organization through an assessment process. Organizations will be assessed by ASA according to the specific requirements of the program. Organizations compliant with such requirements shall be recognized as "*ASA Accredited Training Organization (AATO)*".

According to this ground handling training standard, retraining is not required when an employee moves from one company to another when the training has been provided by the ASA Accredited

Training Organization (AATO). This is invaluable for current as well as future employees in ground handling.

Embracing technological advancements

The ASA is also looking at recognizing the potential of technology in optimizing ground handling operations. Embracing automation, robotics, and digital tools can streamline processes, reduce manual labour, and enhance overall efficiency. Investing in training programs that equip ground handling professionals with the necessary digital skills is essential to ensure their competence in an increasingly technology-driven industry.

Promoting diversity and inclusion

Finally, to foster innovation and excellence in ground handling, the ASA is also looking at ways of actively promoting diversity and inclusion within the sector. Encouraging the recruitment of individuals from diverse backgrounds, supporting gender equality, and providing equal opportunities for career growth will create a workforce that reflects the global passenger base. A diverse workforce brings fresh perspectives, creativity, and adaptability, which are essential in addressing the evolving needs of the aviation industry.

Conclusion

Recruiting and retaining talented individuals in ground handling is a critical factor in the success of the aviation industry. By implementing effective recruitment strategies, creating a supportive work environment, embracing technological advancements, and promoting diversity and inclusion, the ASA can ensure a skilled and motivated workforce. Investing in talent acquisition and retention will ultimately enhance the quality of ground handling services, improve passenger experience, and drive the overall success and competitiveness of the aviation industry.

-

- END -