

The Key to Success in the Aviation Industry

(Presented by AFCAC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

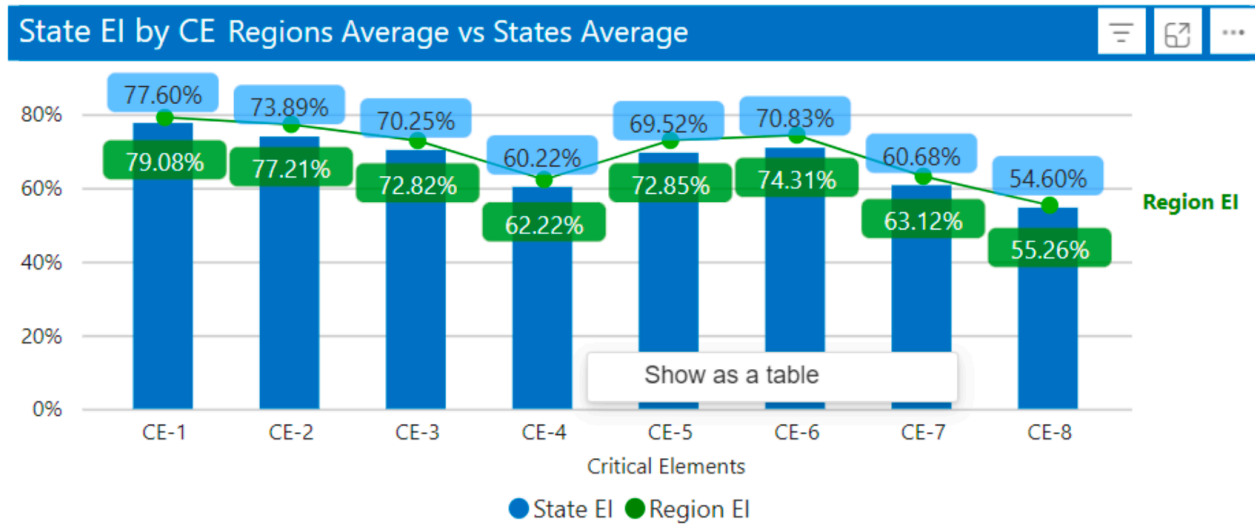
AFCAC has over the years collaborated with International Partners in Capacity Building activities within the continent. While the aviation industry in Africa is undergoing significant growth, it is having difficulty meeting its human capital demands in civil aviation. This is impacting the availability of qualified technical aviation professionals, and the ability of African States to effectively implement ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and other ICAO programs. It is therefore, important that all stakeholders collaborate to ensure that the industry attracts the personnel needed to sustain the operations. This Paper provides a basis of discussion with responses to the pertinent questions that have been raised as far as attraction and retention of the trained and qualified personnel is concerned. In addition, it further provides advice regarding what firms and organizations need to do in order to ensure that personnel have the necessary skills to advance the industry in the 21st century. Finally, it also suggests ways in which the industry associations can work together with aviation firms and other stakeholders to ensure that the industry attracts and retains talent from a diverse employment pool.

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of inadequate Aviation professionals is prevalent globally. ICAO Aviation Safety and Security Audits, have identified the lack of qualified aviation personnel as one of the common deficiency and root cause for low scores in the average Effective Implementation (EI) of critical elements (CEs) of a State Safety and Security Oversight System, hence low levels of compliance with ICAO SARPs in many States. This adversely impedes States' fulfillment of their international obligations under the Chicago Convention and effective participation in the global aviation market. In order to enhance its efforts in the fulfilment of its mandate for Capacity Building to Member States, AFCAC continues to partner with various Institutions, States and Organizations in this endeavor.

DISCUSSION

The following discussions based on the questions raised have been consistently presented and discussed at global and regional forums, including the ICAO Assembly, AFI week events, regional workshops/ seminars etc. The solutions therein lie in the ability of all stakeholders to work together to build and maintain human capacity in various fields of Aviation which include but not limited to aviation meteorology, aircraft manufacturing continues to be a primary hindrance to States performance and compliance to ICAO SARPs, aircraft maintenance, air traffic control, flying, cabin crew, flight dispatch, environmental protection, aviation law, aviation security, air transport, civil aviation management and aerodrome operations. Adequate human resources in these areas as a minimum would assist stakeholders in developing a robust and resilient Civil Aviation industry.



Source: ICAO ISTARs December 2022)

The average least performing EIs by critical element are CE 4 (Technical Personnel, qualification & training) – 60.22 (State EI) / 62.22% (Region EI) and CE-8 (Resolution of Safety Concerns) – 54.60% (State EI) and 55.26% (Region EI). Without qualified and competent personnel in the aviation industry safety cannot be guaranteed. This sets the scene for the following questions to be addressed as raised.

1. How can the aviation industry attract new employees? What advice can you provide to your constituent firms and organizations for successfully attracting talent, given stiff competition from many other industries?

The aviation industry in Africa aviation is fast recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, this recovery and the projected growth cannot be sustained where the industry continues to lose experienced and competent aviation professionals. For the industry to grow and flourish, it must attract skilled work force amidst the stiff competition from many other industries. It would be beneficial to consider the following aspects in order to attract new employees.

a) Awarenesscreation

It is for a fact that, many people do not know the various job opportunities in aviation industry. They are always limited to the obvious careers for pilots, cabin crew and air traffic controllers. This has pushed quite a number to venture into flying yet unable to complete due to the heavy financial resources required for this the training. In essence we have people who are enthusiastic about flying but cannot achieve their dreams. Awareness creation for the other available opportunities in the aviation industry is critical and can be achieved through social media, television, easy writing about aviation, celebration of especial aviation days and any other available means.

Another aspect of creating awareness is to highlight the industry's unique appeal and its exciting and dynamic nature. Constituent firms and organizations need to showcase the opportunities for personal and professional growth, the chance to travel, and the fulfillment of being part of an industry that connects people and cultures worldwide. By enhancing connectivity across continents, it realistically makes the world a global village. Organizations should also use a multi-channel approach to reach potential employees. This includes utilizing social media platforms, online job boards, industry-specific platforms, and career fairs to promote opportunities within the aviation industry. Engagement with universities, colleges, and technical schools to establish partnerships and promote aviation-related programs would also support awareness creation.

b) Attractive recruitment strategies

The aviation industry should design appropriate recruitment strategies to attract more people. Organizations that make recruitment efforts towards specific demographic groups such as the youth and women are more appealing to potential employees stand a greater chance of motivating the work force. Organizations need to recognize that different demographics may have varying motivations for pursuing a career in aviation. It is important that employers develop targeted messaging and initiatives to appeal to students, recent graduates, mid-career professionals, and individuals from diverse backgrounds.

It is also important for employers to offer competitive compensation and benefits: The aviation industry faces competition from other sectors, so it's important to offer competitive salaries and benefits packages. Highlight unique benefits such as flight privileges, health and wellness programs, career development opportunities, and work-life balance initiatives.

The workload in the aviation industry is quite a huge one, the only worse thing to do is to reward staff below the effort they exuberate to get the job done. Aviation is training-based, an existing staff with all the training giving will look for greener pastures elsewhere if their salary cannot support their livelihood. They will run into other business to create a better living, which indirectly is a loss to the aviation industry.

c) Employee morale enhancement programs

In as much as the industry needs more competent and qualified personnel, we cannot underestimate the need of having employees who are passionate at what they do or what they wish to become. Such people have unique approach to solving issues related to aviation and always go all out. Organizations can stir up passion amongst employees though enabling innovation and collaboration. Similarly, employers need to create an atmosphere in which employees are able to creatively contribute ideas and solutions to improve business processes and operations. In addition, a supportive and an all-inclusive work environment that values teamwork, open communication, and knowledge sharing enhances the morale and passion of employees. Morale can also be enhanced whenever employers recognise and reward employees for their innovative contributions.

Employers need to support employees to prioritize work-life balance. The aviation industry often involves irregular schedules and demanding workloads. Organizations need to implement policies and initiatives that promote work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling, wellness programs, and

employee assistance programs. This shows appreciation for employees' efforts and provide opportunities for downtime and relaxation.

The industry should endeavor to be competitive with compensation and benefits for its employees by ensuring regular reviews and improvement of compensation and benefit packages to remain competitive in the market. Where possible employers are advised to conduct salary surveys to ensure salaries align with industry standards and include additional perks such as travel incentives, employee discounts, and retirement savings plans to enhance employee satisfaction.

d) Personnel training and career progression

Training for aviation professionals is usually very costly. In most cases there is no allocation of funds for aviation training and empowerment in the budgets of many States especially in Africa since it is perceived as a luxurious industry. Although such budgets drawn include provisions for educational needs, it is rather unfortunate that few countries consider the inclusion of aviation training in the national budgets. Some sectors of education like medicine take priority and get sponsorship. This leaves many aspiring aviators to support themselves through aviation training with the associated cost factor.

Introduction of aviation syllabus in our educational system can also help create awareness and provoke interest among the youth. It is true that most of our educational systems highlight with emphasis other professional careers right from the beginning as opposes to aviation. If aviation is introduced in a similar manner, it would help the youth to consider careers in aviation early enough.

It is also apparent that some employers do not invest in employee career progression. The employees may be doing all the work, getting the work done but there is no plan for staff to advance their careers and ambitions. This is counterproductive since when employees cannot tell the next stage in their career, there is a higher chance that, they may quit the industry. It is important for employers to take this aspect into consideration in order to motivate staff.

Based on the foregoing, there is great need for the industry embrace personnel training and career progression. Organizations must deliberately communicate their commitment to continuous learning and career advancement. This can be achieved when the organizations highlight training programs, mentorship opportunities, and the potential for growth within the organization. Showcase success stories of individuals who have advanced their careers within the aviation industry.

The industry is urged to establish comprehensive training programs to enhance employees' skills and knowledge and provide opportunities for continuous learning, certifications, and cross-training in different roles within the organization. Employers need to create opportunities for employees to attend industry conferences, workshops, and seminars to stay updated on the latest trends and technologies. Employees must be trained to build their confidence in their respective roles.

It's crucial to tailor your recruitment strategies to the specific needs and desires of potential candidates. By implementing these approaches, you can increase your organization's chances of attracting top talent to the aviation industry.

2. How can the aviation industry retain its current employees? What advice can you provide to firms and organizations to ensure that personnel have the necessary skills to advance the industry in the 21st century?

To retain current employees in the aviation industry and ensure they have the necessary skills to advance in the 21st century, firms and organizations need to embrace the factors discussed for the first question. In addition, the following areas can supplement the efforts made by firms to retain their employees:

a) Willingness to adapt to change

Whenever an organization is open to new ideas that are brought about for various reasons, the employees will feel a sense of belonging and will be motivated to stay in the organization longer. This aspect is instrumental in establishing a culture of learning among the employees. The management needs to cultivate a culture of continuous learning within the organization by promoting the importance of personal growth and provide opportunities for employees to attend conferences, workshops, and industry events. Create an environment where employees feel motivated to expand their knowledge and skills.

In addition, employers should be willing to accept and adapt technological advancements. It's prudent for organizations to invest in and leverage on emerging technologies that can improve efficiency and streamline operations in the aviation industry. By creating opportunities for employees to learn and adapt to these technologies, organizations will increase the chances of retaining employees who are equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in the digital age.

b) Effective communication and inclusivity

Employees feel more secure in an organization that communicates well at all levels and involves employees in decision-making whenever appropriate. Management personnel would benefit more if they embrace open and transparent communication channels within the organization. Involve employees in decision-making processes whenever possible, seeking their input and feedback. When employees feel their voices are heard and their opinions matter, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to the organization. Encourage employees to share their experiences on platforms like Glassdoor or LinkedIn, and regularly communicate your organization's values, achievements, and employee success stories through various channels.

It is important for firms to foster diversity and inclusion of employees in matters that directly affect them. This creates a diverse and inclusive workplace atmosphere where individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives are welcomed and respected. Similarly, organizations need to promote diversity in leadership roles and ensure equal opportunities for career growth in. Diverse teams bring fresh perspectives and ideas, leading to better problem-solving and innovation.

By implementing these strategies, firms and organizations in the aviation industry can create a positive and supportive work environment, retain their current employees, and ensure they have the necessary skills to foster a strong employer brand. Finally, the top management should endeavor to establish and maintain a positive reputation as an employer of choice.

3. How can industry associations work together with aviation firms and other stakeholders to ensure that the industry attracts and retains talent from a diverse employment pool?

Industry associations can play a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusivity within the aviation industry by collaborating with aviation firms and other stakeholders. Here are several ways in which industry associations can work together with these entities to attract and retain talent from a diverse employment pool.

- a) ***Establish Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:*** Industry associations can create dedicated committees or task forces focused on diversity and inclusion. These groups can work with aviation firms and stakeholders to develop strategies, set goals, and implement initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining talent from diverse backgrounds.
- b) ***Establish partnerships with educational institutions:*** Collaborate with universities, colleges, and technical schools to attract students and recent graduates. Offer internships, co-op programs, or scholarships to cultivate a pipeline of talent and demonstrate a commitment to investing in the next generation of aviation professionals.
- c) ***Foster Collaboration and Networking Opportunities:*** Industry associations can organize networking events, conferences, and workshops that bring together professionals from different backgrounds within the aviation industry. These platforms provide opportunities for individuals to connect, share experiences, and build relationships, fostering a more inclusive environment.
- d) ***Support Educational and Mentorship Programs:*** By partnering with educational institutions and aviation firms, industry associations can support scholarship programs and internships targeted at underrepresented groups. Additionally, they can establish mentorship programs that pair experienced professionals with individuals from diverse backgrounds to provide guidance, support, and career development opportunities.
- e) ***Promote Diversity in Leadership Positions:*** Industry associations can encourage aviation firms to have diverse representation in leadership positions. This can be done by advocating for inclusive hiring practices, promoting mentorship and sponsorship programs, and recognizing and highlighting success stories of diverse leaders within the industry.
- f) ***Provide Training and Resources:*** Industry associations can develop training programs and resources to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within aviation firms. These resources can include workshops, webinars, and best practice guidelines that help organizations create an inclusive work environment and address unconscious biases.
- g) ***Advocate for Policies and Legislation:*** Industry associations can engage with government bodies and regulatory authorities to advocate for policies and legislation that promote diversity and inclusivity within the aviation industry. They can support initiatives that address barriers to entry, eliminate discrimination, and encourage equal opportunities for all individuals.
- h) ***Collect and Share Data:*** Industry associations can collaborate with aviation firms to collect and analyse data on diversity and inclusion within the industry. This data can help identify areas of improvement, measure progress, and share best practices to drive meaningful change.

- i) ***Raise Awareness and Promote Positive Representation:*** Industry associations can use their platforms to raise awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusion. This can be done through campaigns, publications, and media outreach, highlighting the value of diverse perspectives and the positive impact they have on the industry.
- j) ***Promote apprenticeships and internships:*** Encourage firms to offer apprenticeship and internship programs that provide hands-on experience and exposure to the actual work environment.

By working in tandem with aviation firms and other stakeholders, industry associations can create a more diverse and inclusive industry that attracts and retains talent from a wide range of backgrounds, ultimately leading to a stronger and more innovative aviation sector.

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