

Alaska Airlines Meets The Operational Changes With Flux

SUCCESS STORY

Alaska

Running a successful airline is no small operational challenge. Rigorous checks are needed on today's complex airplanes to ensure complete safety and optimal performance. Multiple teams must also coordinate to make sure the whole machine runs smoothly and on schedule.

Alaska Airlines, the 5th largest U.S. airline, shows how an airline can get all of these pieces right. Alaska is recognized as a leader in the industry, ranking #1 in Wall Street Journal's 2015 Airline Scorecard measuring key operational areas as well as the #1 traditional carrier by J.D. Power for ten straight years. Achieving this is no easy feat in such a competitive market. We'll detail one way they achieved this operational excellence in this case study.

Challenge

Bob Hoelzen is the Operations Manager for the Functional Check Flight Department, a group tasked with evaluating aircraft performance and collecting systems data on flights into and out of periodic maintenance checks. Initially, these checks were performed using paper copies of a checklist with blank spaces for data to be filled in.

"The operation I manage could not function at the level it does without Flux."



Bob Hoelzen
FCF Operations Manager,
Alaska Airlines

At the end of the flight, this data would be transcribed into a separate PDF form that could be distributed via email. To allow for meaningful analysis, the data would then be transcribed into a spreadsheet. This process was very cumbersome and awkward to manage in the cockpit during flight, and the follow up process for the data was extremely time consuming and prone to error.

Solution

With the introduction of the iPad, Bob's team first used Readdle's PDF Expert app to transfer this process to a digital format. While going paperless was a big step forward, data collection was still difficult as there was no way to get the output from the document into a database. This led Bob to try Fluix, Readdle's paperless workflow solution for teams. He says,

"Every question or roadblock we had using our present system was met with a positive response and capabilities I had not imagined."

After a trial period in January 2015, we set up an account and began to train pilots on the use of Fluix. It was a very easy transition and the capabilities of the app meant that a lot of the manual tasks were now completed with just a simple tap of the "Submit" button. The workflow is a very powerful tool and allowed the export of data in the XFDF format that we can process outside of the app. The pilot group has been enthusiastically supportive of Fluix. The app is intuitive and easy to use, and the ability to combine previously separate workflows into a single button tap made the integration a success from the start.

While initially only used in the cockpit for checklist and data collection, the use of Fluix has increased to include sending forms and information to our Scheduling groups, Finance and Maintenance. Our most recent expansion is to include our outside vendors to facilitate them in preparing the aircraft at the conclusion of scheduled maintenance. This latest step is a showcase for the Cabinet feature. As work progresses on the aircraft and various sections of a checklist are performed, all parties can log in at any time and see the progress being made towards completion."

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Results

“Fluix has made the Functional Check Flight Department a viable, productive organization. Our ability to collect and distribute data through the company has been instrumental in changing procedures and allowing us to change our work focus based on analysis of the data. What used to take hours now can be accomplished in minutes.

A flight crew can send a completed form with over 150 discrete data points and all of the discrepancies noted during a test flight to our Maintenance and Engineering team before they even leave the cockpit at the end of the flight.”

- 1 Critical tasks that used to take hours now take minutes
- 2 Data now flows easily from the team’s iPads into the database where it can be analyzed and acted on
- 3 The flight crew, Maintenance and Engineering teams can coordinate in real time, improving the efficiency of the entire organization

*“Customer support for Fluix has been phenomenal.
For our operation, Fluix is the answer!”*



Bob Hoelzen
FCF Operations Manager, Alaska Airlines

Contact us to make a step forward

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