Making the Switch

Effectively Manage Top Concerns when
Technology Changes Occur

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OVERVIEW

It is understood that technology is a necessary component of improving operational efficiencies within your organization. Your maintenance team, as well as operations staff, would benefit from the improved workflows, automation and data transparency made possible by incorporating automated processes.

Yet the thought of making the move away from old legacy or paper-based systems seems daunting. A few of the most common concerns include: cost versus return on investment, or ROI, transitioning data to digital format and potential operational disruptions.

The following discussion points offer some direction in addressing those fears and helping your organization make a successful technology investment that supports staff, delivers improved productivity and streamlines workflows.

THE ROI

One of the greatest deterrents of digitization in any market is the inability to evaluate investment costs versus returns. Business aviation is not immune to this problem. Too often, in the world of technology, the promise of improved efficiency, safety and ease-of-use is unrealized.

If managed correctly, the ROI of electronic maintenance tracking can be exponential and the tangible benefits recognized almost immediately. Electronic maintenance tracking is not an all-or-nothing endeavor that has to happen overnight—think of it as a process, not an event.

While there may be many solution providers in the marketplace, consider the enrollment or onboarding process. What measures does your vendor take to ensure that data is captured accurately? Make sure that the enrollment process includes a Chapter 5 check and that a full audit of your data is completed during this process. Take baby steps, check the boxes, and soon your flight department will reap the rewards from moving to an electronic maintenance tracking format.

Automated, or electronic, maintenance tracking allows for an easy check of fleet status and open maintenance items through a dashboard as well as drill-down options to access due lists, status

reports and other key maintenance data. Once electronic record-keeping capabilities are in place, it's a simple step to facilitate other functionalities such as work order management, inventory control or electronic logbooks to your system. The modules are intuitive and speak to each other, thus eliminating redundant data entry and paperwork. Data transparency between operations and maintenance is established as well as improved workflows. Communication is enhanced and maintenance electronically documented for easy access during logbook research. When you reach the point of electronic logbooks and eSignatures, be sure that your provider meets the regulatory requirements of your governing body. There are certain measures that must be met to ensure an accurate historical record and versioning control.

THE DATA DILEMMA

So, now you've decided that electronic records management could help your organization improve productivity, but the thought of moving all maintenance documents for an entire fleet to a secure digital environment causes some concern. How long will it take? Will I lose information in transition? Do I have to dedicate one person for data entry?

Moving to electronic maintenance tracking is not a do-it-yourself requirement. A trusted, reputable solution partner will have the skills and tools to securely transfer your paper or digital data into the new system quickly. Additionally, make sure your provider is able to accommodate custom development and solutions to fit your desired workflows and templates.

For instance, Hospital Wing (Memphis Medical Center Air Ambulance Service, Inc.), a nonprofit air ambulance company that provides emergency airlift services and inter-hospital transfers to critically ill and injured patients within a 250-mile radius of Memphis, Tennessee, shifted to the Flightdocs HMX platform several years ago. Soon after signing on with Flightdocs, the DOM sent copies of all spreadsheets, tracking information and maintenance logs to the Flightdocs Enroll-ment Team to develop customized templates for all aircraft—a process that takes anywhere from a week to a month depending on the size and age of the fleet and quantity of documents. Once the data transfer and customized templates were developed, the management solution was ready for use.

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As noted earlier, the transition to electronic records management offers an opportunity to audit maintenance documentation and verify all requirements are met. A quality provider should not only translate data to a central digital system, but also assure data is complete and accurate.

For instance, one of the most common documentation errors is the recording of inspection intervals. Make sure that your provider checks your data to ensure inspection interval requirements have been recorded and signed off, and then verified/compared with aircraft manufacturing data. The transition process should involve consider-able communication between the system provider and yourself to ensure accuracy. Certain models of aircraft are more prone to require-ment-error issues based on how the inspection program is designed. Special attention must be given to inspection items which have multiple "effectivities" based on any number of variables.

EMPLOYEE BUY-IN

No digital solution is successful without employee buy-in, input from those who will be asked to use it every day: the mechanics, techni-cians and pilots. Inevitably, there will be naysayers and holdouts. Engage them, make them part of the solution and gently bring them into the 21st century.

With that in mind, remember that electronic record keeping should ultimately make your life easier. Paper-based systems are ripe for introducing error and, depending on the aircraft model, take an enormous amount of effort to ensure the data reflects the current status of the aircraft. Your provider should be able to demonstrate how mobile device-enabled solutions will ease their pain accessing and manipulating aircraft data. The tools should be intuitive, user friendly and require little up-front training to get started.

Finally, after all the data is loaded and audited and employees have received initial training and questions are addressed, don't forget about customer service. It will often be the differentiator between those competing for business. Who will be there for you 24/7/365 for any questions or recurring training? Who will always pick up the phone and never place you in voicemail? Who is most responsive to customer-initiated inquiries? Who values the customer above all else? Your vendor should value your business and demonstrate it by the level of customer service they deliver 365 days a year.

Additionally, there are other methods to help aid your organization during a digital transformation. According to Forbes (read the article), there are four effective methods to ensure employee adoption. First is value alignment. Seeking to transform your company to digital should be in line with the overall ideology of the organization. Technology-forward companies are obvious candidates for such a transformation. Next is creating a narrative that focuses on the visions, goals and creating a roadmap for change. Third is identifying the best method from which to approach the technological learning curve. Ensuring that training is both engaging and effective is critical in the adoption of new technologies. Lastly is a willingness to "start small but finish strong." It's ok to revise deadlines to be certain that the organization is adopting the technology at a steady, healthy pace. The most important aspect is acclimating to the change rather than meeting arbitrary deadlines.

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