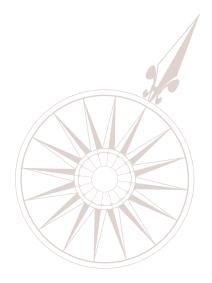BY ROBERT B. BARNES

Paths to Proficiency

A new organization aims to provide a global pilot training best practices clearinghouse.

There are as many ways to teach flying as there are good instructors. And each of these good instructors has developed special ways to guide students toward becoming safe and competent pilots instead of simply accumulating hours to satisfy a minimum standard. Until now, it has been too hard to share such personal techniques beyond the local flight line for the benefit of all instructors.

The International Association of Flight Training Professionals (IAFTP) has been organized to facilitate the identification, recognition and timely communication of demonstrable global pilot training best practices.

IAFTP has evolved from a three-year, online discussion of pilot training practices by more than 300 aviation professionals. During this discussion, the concept of pilot training best practices often surfaced.

However, it was quickly discovered that more than 25 aviation safety organizations worldwide currently use the term "best practices" when describing their individual training initiatives. Unfortunately, it also became apparent that there is no consistent definition of this term.

It has been suggested that the phrase "best practices" implies a collection of standards, procedures and techniques that are used by pilot training organizations to achieve specific outcomes. Another perspective suggests that a best practice is not a standard, since a standard is the desired proficiency — rather, a best practice should be considered the best way to achieve a specific standard.

Of course, including the word "best" implies that there is some form of evaluation and rating system for pilot training practices. However, there is no such process and, therefore, every organization has used its own internal experience to determine its "best" way to help students achieve the desired proficiency. In reality, what is called a best practice today is only a local organizational practice.

While today's best practices may be defined within the scope of a local organization, the term is still used globally, even in the absence of a neutral base for reference and evaluation. The implications of this are significant — unless a specific training practice is known to be widely used and is documented to be effective, it should not be described as a best practice. It is simply a training practice or technique, nothing more.

Global Clearinghouse Established

The idea of creating an organization to provide a global pilot training best practices clearinghouse was first introduced publicly at the World Aviation Training Conference and Trade Show in April 2010, and IAFTP was incorporated in January 2011.

IAFTP members are flight training professionals directly involved in the conduct or support of pilot training activities; the organization's singular goal is to work toward improving the competency of all pilots — in airline, air taxi, business and general aviation — to enhance overall aviation safety.

It is important to note that IAFTP's focus is not to establish standards, create a certification body or attempt to influence regulators. It is to provide a credible, independent and international clearinghouse for pilot training best practices that have been developed by flight training professionals to respond to individual pilot or operator needs.

Organizing Training Practices

As discussed, unless a specific training practice is known to be widely used and is documented to be effective, it should not be described as a "best practice." Therefore, IAFTP will use this hierarchy of terms to organize pilot training practices:

- **Personal technique** for accomplishing task proficiency — an instructor may have several;

- **Personal best practice** — the instructor's most effective technique for achieving specific task proficiency;

- **Local best practice** — used by an unofficial group of instructors or a local training organization;

- **Regional best practices** — used and/or officially designated by a recognized standards body in a region, such as North America, Europe, or Asia; and,

- **Industry standard best practices** — identified by a recognized international standards body as globally applicable.

Collecting Training Practices

The heart of this international clearinghouse will be the IAFTP Web site, <IAFTP.org>.

Each month, the public area of the IAFTP Web site will feature an article focusing on a high priority pilot training topic. An introductory section written by a subject matter expert will establish the link between that topic and pilot training best practices. This introduction will then be used to develop three personal perspectives: how a flight training organization approaches this topic, how an instructor teaches this topic and how a student reacts to the learning experience.

Monthly articles will include such topics as upset recovery, loss of control in flight, runway incursions and excursions, level busts, communications, crew resource management, loss of separation, and safety management systems. Reader comments will be encouraged.

Each monthly training article will thereby provide a focus for collecting instructor practices to be processed as potential best practices through a members-only IAFTP Pilot Training Best Practices Forum and later posting to the IAFTP Pilot Training Best Practices Portal on the SKYbrary site, <SKYbrary.aero>.

SKYbrary is a "wiki" resource site created by Eurocontrol, the International Civil Aviation Organization, Flight Safety Foundation and other organizations to be a freely available, comprehensive online source of aviation safety information. It was launched in May 2008, with a goal to capture authoritative aviation industry information and create cumulative knowledge, especially about critical safety issues.

William R. Voss, president and CEO of Flight Safety Foundation, recently said, "Having been involved in its creation, I can say without reservation that SKYbrary is an unparalleled tool in the world of aviation safety."

Announced in February of this year, the IAFTP Pilot Training Best Practices Portal on SKYbrary will provide free access to pilot training practices that have been collected from around the world and peer-reviewed by pilot training professionals. ⤳

Robert B. Barnes is president of IAFTP.