

# BEYOND Competition



Last month, Flight Safety Foundation announced a partnership with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) on its personnel training and qualification initiative. Since then, I have been asked how and why the Foundation would get involved in the difficult issues involved in the looming global shortage of qualified personnel.

First, it is important that the problem be addressed from a safety and quality perspective, and not just from a commercial or competitive standpoint which, at its most basic level, is just making sure the other guy runs out of pilots first. That is not the right answer for our industry or the people we serve. The Foundation wants to keep the focus on the innovations and safety improvements that the industry will have to deliver on its way to doubling in size over the next 20 years.

But while we begin to act on future challenges, we can't lose focus on what is happening today. Last year, for the first time in decades, loss-of-control accidents surpassed controlled flight into terrain as the number one killer in aviation. Did growth pressures, lowered qualifications for hiring, or changes in crew interactions have something to do with that? I don't know, but I am sure the question cannot be ignored.

This industry spent decades implementing crew resource management. The resulting safety gains could dissipate quickly if communication in the cockpit falls apart because of generational gaps, culture gaps or knowledge gaps. I expect a number of accident reports during the coming 12 months will make us think hard about that.

One last reason that the Foundation is getting in the middle of this problem is that it touches every part of the industry. We are the

only organization positioned to reach across all segments of the professional aviation industry. The shortage of qualified personnel must be addressed in a systematic way that meets the needs of the *whole* industry. For the next 10 years, a new business jet will be delivered for every airliner produced, and each will create its own demand for qualified operators.

If regional carriers run out of people, smaller communities will lose service. If the major pilot training centers run out of instructors, there will be pilot supply problems around the world. If government regulators can't retain qualified inspectors, no one will be left to safeguard industry growth.

You can bring this problem closer to home: If you fall ill in the Australian outback, you expect that an experienced pilot will be there to fly you to the hospital. If my child is in an accident, I hope a talented pilot is there to fly her to the trauma center.

The point is simple. It is time to drop our competitive instincts and look for solutions that work for everybody. IATA and the Foundation have started working on this together with the hope that others will join in. Maybe if we take this on together, we will start looking like an industry that young people once again will want to join.

A white, cursive handwritten signature of William R. Voss on a dark background.

*William R. Voss  
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