

Final report on the research effort for Project #CA003, Standardization of Training for Training Administrators.

Overview

This was an 18-month research effort conducted by Dr. John R. Griffin, as the Principal Investigator, and Ms. Alyssa Pavlik as the Research Graduate Assistant. Both members of the research team have a background in air traffic control, either through formal post-secondary education or years of practical job experience in various types of facilities.

The initial effort of the research involved a thorough review of the content and methodologies of the FAA's formal training course #50310. After completion of the course and literature review, face-to-face interviews were scheduled and conducted with training administrators at Daytona, Orlando, Jacksonville Center, Atlanta Center, Dallas-Ft Worth TRACON, and the 50310 course monitor at Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, Oklahoma City, OK. Scheduling the interviews was a very time consuming process which took months to complete. This resulted in the submission of a no-cost extension request to allow time for a proper review and analysis of the collected data. Once the interviews were completed, the lengthy process of sorting the collected data, reviewing and analyzing the results of each interview, and finding a common core or thread, was conducted. The team then formulated their findings and recommendations based on the interviews and observations made by the research team during the process.

Findings

When conducting the interviews, we found the FAA training personnel to be most cooperative. They were very open and candid with their responses to our questions. We feel that this was a great help to us in ensuring that the data we collected were accurate and complete. We appreciate their cooperation, without which, this research would not have been possible. This reflects the quality of individuals the FAA has placed into these responsible positions.

The research team found issues that were common to all types of facilities and some that were specific to a certain type of facility. We feel that all of these factors, in some way, have an influence on the quality, effectiveness, and eventual success of a training program/department.

- Currency of formal training. - Some of the training administrators received training shortly after assuming the position, usually within one year. Others had received the training years earlier when a training slot had been available and only recently had been assigned the position. One individual had been formally trained over 10 years before actually assuming the position of Training Administrator. Some expressed a desire for refresher training to be conducted at specific time intervals.
- Content of formal training – The training administrators felt the formal training received lacked depth. They felt it did not prepare them for the job of Training Administrator. There was too much coverage on computer programs like TRACKS and forms, which

many of the training administrators never deal with. These functions are usually allocated to the training support specialists. Most felt that the course was outdated and too technically oriented. While it covered the regulations and a computer program, they would like to have seen more coverage into the workings of the position itself. Everyone seemed to agree that the current training should not be so technical. Most described it as “boring” and they would like more training into the practical side of running a training department. Everyone seemed to agree that there should be a portion of the training that is facility-specific since the training and the problems encountered vary with each facility.

- Information sharing – There is a need for a better, user friendly and current, method to exchange ideas and to facilitate inter-facility discussions between the training administrators and their staff members and personnel at other locations. If a sharing network was established, it would need people that are engaged and are able to respond quickly to time-sensitive training inquiries. Most administrators felt that if it was not timely, it was of little value and a blog platform would not work because of the potential problem of limited privacy. There would need to be restrictions and assurances in place. Administrators spoke highly of the training summit held for training administrators. They thought it was a great success and something to be continued annually.
- Transitioning personnel – The issues arising during the transition to a new training administrator vary greatly at different facilities. Some administrators were fortunate enough to spend some time with the outgoing administrators and gain a great deal of knowledge from that individual. Others found themselves thrust into the position due to a medical situation or unforeseen incident requiring immediate replacement. Some of the predecessors left a valuable reference book or “read ahead” type of file which provided assistance to the new administrator. Of course, some others had nothing to guide them in the transition to their training role, which left the new administrator with little or no information on how to correctly perform his/her job. This seemed to be a common occurrence. The newly assigned individuals may have other roles or positions with the facility that they are expected to maintain after assuming the training administrator position. Some training administrators were wearing a variety of hats and can find themselves overwhelmed.
- Documentation and training – A common thread between all facilities is the trainers' attitudes. Many of the CPCs do not wish to be trainers and have very low motivation to excel in that function. Therefore, you end up with a less than robust effort towards training and poor documentation on a trainee's performance and progress. This is usually discovered at the time of Training Review Boards. Some administrators felt that occasionally trainers started trainees into position too early. They felt this creates an erosion of training at an early stage in the process.

Recommendations

- The formal training through course #50310 should happen within the first three to six months of assignment as the training administrator. The newly assigned personnel need that professional reinforcement and introduction to the information and methodologies required to operate an effective and standardized training program. Establish the guidelines before individual preferences or poor judgment creates an undesirable training environment at the facility.
- Restructure the formal training course. Have all personnel together for the first three days, then split into either a terminal track or an en route track, depending on their facility of assignment for the rest of the training. The first three days would focus on the directives and FAA training guidelines. The second 3 days would focus on answering questions, practical scenarios, case studies, the addition of hands-on situational training, and the specific duties and responsibilities for each facility type. Attendees could be shown what constitutes a good training program versus a bad training program as well as some of the pitfalls and dangers to avoid in training development. How to develop an effective desk guide could be covered. An example desk guide or template could be offered to the training administrators. Another option would be to lengthen the course to two weeks in order to accommodate facility specific training by facility type.

Yet another option is to add a third track for Training Support Specialists and administrative personnel. This track would focus on the TRACKS system and the requirements for recording individual certification training. In all of the tracks, offer “free time” that could be utilized allowing the individuals to have discussions on their jobs, possible issues they may have already encountered and any questions they might have. With the different specific tracks, more detail could be added regarding developing and maintaining effective training programs for the training administrators. These program enhancements would make the training more robust, add valuable facility-specific training, and increase the value of the training support specialists.

- Develop a new, more effective course evaluation system. Send out a follow-up survey to the attendees later after they have returned to their respective facilities. Encourage constructive feedback to be used in course improvements and revisions.
- High level Terminal facilities should have a dedicated Training Administrator position established. It should not be assigned as an additional duty.
- A current listing of effective resources available to them should accompany each training administrator as they leave the academy training. These listings should include a current contact listing of their peers with current contact information. This is only going to be useful if the information is updated on a regular basis.

- Some specific types of training to be included in the formal training course, where applicable, would include National Training Database, TRT tool for budget, CTC contract, basic training on the different stages of training, recurring and required annual training, KSM websites, ELMS, and Qmart. Also, expand the 3120.4 discussions.
- Recommended contents for the Training Administrators' take home packages after completing the formal training course would include sections on:
 - What is the training program?
 - How do you run an effective training program?
 - What are your responsibilities as a Training Administrator?
 - How do you write your training order to support your facility?
 - What are the requirements when selecting an OJTI?
 - How do you develop effective classroom training?
 - What is needed to support classroom training?
 - Who develops scenarios for you?
 - What kind of scenarios do you need to run?
 - How do you develop effective training scenarios?
 - Where do you go when you need help in a particular area of your training program?

Providing this basic information would advance the effort to standardize organization-wide training. This would create an environment where everyone follows the same basic guidelines in establishing and maintaining an effective training program.

- Create a refresher course (perhaps a 50310A) for personnel that have not had training within the past three years or so.
- Replace the TRACKS Program with an updated, more user-friendly system. Trying to master this outdated system takes up too much of your valuable face-to-face training time in the formal course.
- Consider establishing a Training Administrator website or a mentor program, perhaps by region, with a FAQ link including the ability to ask questions and receive timely responses from current administrators at other facilities. Could possibly use the Yammer or Slack applications.
- Continue the annual training summit, but remove the cap of 50 attendees. We only heard positive comments about the summit and it seems to be effective. We believe that more individuals could and should benefit from this annual event.
- Eliminate TRACKS and transition to the CEDAR program. This would basically

eliminate half the material currently contained in course 50310. That would free-up the time for the addition of dedicated tracks for the different levels of facilities and the training support specialists and the current course would not have to be lengthened.

- Keep the 3120.4 discussions of the formal training. The course monitor feels that is a vital part of the course. Understanding roles and responsibilities, proficiency training, and operational requirements are important topics that help with interpreting the orders.
- Expand the media and presentation methods of the formal course. With some of the materials, filmed scenarios, embedded videos, and perhaps the introduction of virtual reality, or augmented reality, in the course would be beneficial.