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Getting Fresh With CRM

What a shame! It seems like many CRM instructors have fallen victim to the “easy way out” methodology for delivering their CRM courses. This might begin with a “fill in the box approach,” which may be a reflection of management’s misunderstanding—or perceived importance—of CRM. However, it can also be a result of a disinterested CRM course developer/facilitator. Worse yet, it can be a combination of both!

By “easy way out,” what I am referring to are things like the overuse of videos, outdated data, and “recycled” CRM courses (i.e., cut and paste from another operator). For example, I have seen many instructors simply show accident movies for an entire day. This does nothing to engage the attendees—and in fact—it’s the easiest way to put them to sleep and/or create an environment of apathy and resentment (i.e., why are you wasting my valuable time?).

Not to diminish the importance of the Pan Am/KLM Tenerife runway disaster nearly 40 years ago, or the American Airlines CFIT crash near Cali, Colombia 20 years ago, but these accidents have simply become overdone. Perhaps it’s time that we scale back on those accidents (pretty much all pilots are intimately familiar with them) and dig deeper into some of the newer case studies. Yes, there are still plenty of runway incursions and automation errors to focus on (the causes of the aforementioned accidents), but there is much more going on today than there was 40 years ago, and we need to freshen things up to address today’s busier, more complex, operational aviation environment.

According to the latest IATA aircraft accident statistics, the top three causes of accidents, in order, are 1) Loss of Control Inflight, 2) CFIT, and, 3) Runway Excursions. Yet, many CRM courses fail to put a strategic focus on these topics. That, my friends, is a missed opportunity! I could go on and on here with topic selection but I think you get the point. Keep the course fresh and focus on the real world.

Don't be afraid to develop your course from scratch. Customizing your CRM course to fit your operation is germane to its efficacy and ultimate success. A helicopter CRM course will be different from an airline CRM course which will be different from a Part 135 CRM course. Additional things to keep in mind when developing and facilitating (yes, facilitating rather than instructing) your CRM courses are (not in any particular order):

- Try to avoid too much theory. Focus on practical, real-world issues.
- Make the course very interactive.
- Use videos to make concise points for discussion (videos can be edited). Don't show full one-hour episodes of airplane crash movies. You WILL put your attendees to sleep.
- Make sure your CRM facilitator is motivated, knowledgeable, trustworthy, and passionate.
- Some of the best media can be rendered useless by ineffective facilitators. Approximately 30% of the CRM course is about the media, while 70% of the course is about the facilitator and his or her presentation skills!