

Time to Step Up to the Plate

Taking a stand to eliminate errors

Some experts define human factors as something that affects judgement at a critical moment that leads to an error. These judgement calls can be broken down to two levels: *Conscious Errors* and *Unconscious Errors*.

Conscious errors

Conscious errors occur when individuals actively make decisions (not errors) to not do their job properly. Does any of this sound familiar?

- *Not* fixing work stands when they are loose because technicians have not had the training to do that particular task
- *Not* lubricating a screw jack at the scheduled time because it looks as though there is enough grease from the last time
- *Not* putting safety caps on O₂ generators
- *Not* double checking their own work or the work of others when required
- *Not* installing a piece of flashing on an aircraft properly so that weeks later it can fall off the aircraft and land as potential runway FOD.

It makes me uncomfortable just knowing this type of attitude still exists and is still being introduced into the industry every day.

Professional challenges

These types of purposeful decisions have to be stopped, but how? What can be done with employees whose attitudes are such that they will not fix equipment and keep areas clean around them? Why are “professional” technicians so rebellious?

And, management is not exempt. Recent examples in the news of managers who threaten their workers overtly or subtly cause one to stop and be concerned about the future of our profession. What can be done with management that writes and enforces policy and procedures, and then when it comes time to practice the policy, they break every policy in their own book?

We have enough challenges in our daily lives at home and at work without introducing poor attitudes in our work environment.

Unconscious errors

The second level of human error is where a well-meaning person, such as a technician, made an error without realizing that the error occurred. This is the unconscious error made due to one or more distractions. These are errors that can be prevented through human factor awareness training and requires management and technicians meeting together and discussing the human factors that affect judgement. It requires them to work together to create a synergistic

environment to help each other perform with pride and professionalism. Fortunately, we have many mentors in the industry that have set examples and encouraged the same positive attitudes. We all know people like this. Their attitude is that if you do something, do it a 110% or do not even start. They focus on learning to live to leave a legacy and to really connect with the people in their lives.

It takes teamwork

What will it take for all of us, from management to technicians, to gain this spirit and passion? It is time to put our gloves down and leave our egos at the door. Stop personal agendas and put an end to apathy. We must work together to provide the traveling public with the safest means to travel around the world. If we all share a vision of zero error, then it is up to you and me to do our best, not only personally but also as a team.

Rules of the Game

Practicing these four basic rules will give you a good start toward reducing errors.

1. Communicate

For many of us, communicating and expressing our thoughts and ideas is very difficult. Before you speak, learn to compose your “one-minute commercial” to get your point across effectively. Do not ramble. This will benefit you in your working life as well as your personal life.

Being a good communicator means that you have to be a good listener. Focus on what someone is telling you. Do not be distracted by thinking about what you are going to say as soon as the other person stops for air. Good communication creates an environment of trust.

2. Look for the positive in life and the good in each other

Anyone can criticize, condemn and complain. A human being that truly looks for the good or positives in life will always be looked up to and respected. Do the lights dim in a room when you walk in and everyone ignores you, or does the room brighten up? Life is too short; we have to live along the way. How long is your list of people whose lives you have affected positively? Think of not only your peers but about your family; son, daughter, nieces, nephew. Are they glad to see you? We never know when our life will end or health will fail us. Make a positive impact on the lives of those around you – now.

3. Pride

If what we do in life is done with pride and integrity, then the human elements will have a hard time in tripping us up. If we become complacent and let our guard down, even momentarily, then we are setting ourselves up for error.

4. Set goals

All of this may hit home for the moment but unless we have written goals and take “action,” we can talk about what we should do all we want. Written goals keep us on track and monitor our progress.

Attitude adjustments

The technician will personally benefit in many ways by going to work with an attitude of “What am I going to learn today?” and how he or she can help a manager or co-worker do their job, better. Having a negative, rebellious attitude not only hurts our profession; it is dangerous for those who fly in the aircraft we maintain. If this is the attitude the workforce is fostering today, what type of culture are they creating for when they become supervisors?

What goes around comes around!

About the author

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