

Global Aerospace Offers Insights for Understanding the Breadth of the Aviation Talent Shortage

Aviation Talent Shortage: Making Headway on a Critical Issue

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For several years, aviation has wrestled with a persistent problem: a growing talent shortage that threatens to disrupt operations, increase costs and potentially impact safety. Perhaps more than most industries, aviation relies on a skilled, motivated, dedicated workforce to serve its stakeholders and accomplish its goals.

What's behind the aviation talent shortage? Why has the issue been so challenging to address? What are industry leaders doing on various fronts to tackle the problem? This article addresses those critical questions.

It also notes that, despite the size and complexity of the challenge, progress is being made and asserts that aviation's future remains bright and exciting.

What's Behind the Headwinds?

Aviation has found it difficult to move the talent supply in a positive direction for several reasons. One is the advancing age of the workforce. Many aviation professionals are at or quickly approaching retirement age.

That wouldn't be a problem if there were a strong pipeline to fill the impending vacancies. However, a second aspect of the talent shortage is that aviation today finds itself competing with and losing to other industries, like technology, that seem to have surpassed it in terms of their ability to attract and retain workers.

Then, there are what are perceived to be the high cost and time commitments associated with aviation roles. For example, many in the workforce feel that the investment in becoming a pilot is higher than the return.

Finally, while we would all prefer to be no longer talking about the pandemic, its effects on aviation linger. The dramatic reduction in demand for aviation services at its height forced many to move to other industries, draining a talent pool that has yet to be refilled.

Understanding the Breadth of the Aviation Talent Shortage

When people outside the industry hear about the aviation talent shortage, they immediately (and understandably) think of pilots. However, the problem spans the entire sector.

Organizations are, in fact, having trouble recruiting and retaining flight crews, leading to issues like canceled flights and reduced routes, but that is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. There are also shortages of baggage handlers, ramp agents and ground

support equipment operators, which can cause baggage handling issues, extend turnaround times, and lead to flight delays and cancellations.

The lack of air traffic controllers is also problematic. Many facilities are below targeted staffing levels, which raises serious safety concerns.

Maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities are similarly struggling to find enough certified technicians to work on aircraft. That scarcity can impact aircraft turnaround times, which in turn can affect the operational readiness of flight departments.

Ultimately, addressing the aviation talent issue isn't as simple as enticing more people to become pilots.

Cleared for Takeoff: An Industry Ascending?

Despite facing significant workforce challenges, aviation is, in many ways, poised to pull out of its dive. Technological advancements are rapidly transforming aircraft design and operations, air traffic management and ground operations.

For instance, initiatives like sustainable aviation fuels and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) through electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft are capturing the attention of a new generation of aviation professionals. The increasing use of data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) is also generating interest and creating a new pathway for those focused on technology careers. New roles and new skill sets are causing them to take a fresh look at aviation.

While there is still a long way to go, these and many other advancements are re-energizing the talent pipeline.

From Increased Outreach to Financial Assistance

Many efforts are underway to turn the tide on aviation's talent shortage, and the good news is that they are having a positive effect. Some of the strategies include proactively engaging with schools and diverse communities to increase awareness about aviation careers, adopting new teaching methods to make training more engaging and effective and creating mentorship programs.

Stakeholders are also seeking legislative support to reduce the financial burden on students, such as allowing educational savings funds in the U.S. to be used for FAA-certified pilot and maintenance training programs and making vocational training more affordable. Plus, organizations are increasingly looking at issues like compensation and work-life balance to ensure aviation compares favorably to other industries.

Supporting the Innovators and Difference-Makers

At Global Aerospace, we are striving to have a positive impact on aviation's talent challenges. That includes helping innovative companies that are driving the industry forward and making it more appealing to those entering the workforce.

Supporting training and knowledge sharing is also critical. We are doing that in various ways at programs worldwide, including:

- **In the United States.** We support educational institutions like Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and their array of aviation-related degrees. These schools play a pivotal role in workforce development, including innovative programs to address shortages like those for air traffic controllers through direct FAA partnerships. We also support initiatives like the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Young Eagles program, which has introduced millions of young people to aviation through free introductory flights with volunteer pilots. As many current aviation professionals can attest, the thrill of flight can ignite a lifelong passion and set a young person on a course for a future career.
- **In the United Kingdom.** The Air League's "Soaring to Success" career enrichment program is having a powerful impact. Funded by the Department for Transport, Boeing, British Airways, CAA and London Elstree Aerodrome, it bridges the gap between education and the aviation/aerospace industry, offering career conferences, e-learning modules, and experience days to students to showcase the many available opportunities.
- **In Canada.** Numerous flight schools and robust aircraft maintenance and avionics technology programs are working to meet industry demand. These globally recognized programs are vital for developing skilled aviation professionals.

Looking Ahead

The talent shortage in aviation is a significant challenge. However, as recent efforts and their positive results have demonstrated, it is not insurmountable.

The problem demands a proactive, multi-layered approach focused on attracting, training, and retaining a diverse, skilled and dedicated workforce, but the outlook is bright. By supporting innovation, fostering collaboration, and investing in the next generation, the aviation industry can successfully navigate the headwinds it faces.

About Global Aerospace

Global Aerospace has a century of experience and powerful passion for providing aviation insurance solutions that protect industry stakeholders and empower the industry to thrive. With financial stability from a pool of the world's foremost capital, we leverage innovative ideas, advanced technology and a powerful synergy among diverse team members to underwrite and process claims for the many risks our clients face. Headquartered in the UK, we have offices in Canada, France, Germany and throughout the United States. Learn more at <https://www.global-aero.com/>

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