



Aviation in Crisis

Corona requires Changes – Corona creates Risks – Corona must be managed
MoC is the Answer

by Andreas Grauer

The Challenge

The SARS-CoV-2 and the Covid 19 pandemic caused by it confronts the aviation industry with exceptional challenges. Aviation suffers particularly from travel restrictions and reduced economic activity as a result of the measures to limit the impact of the epidemic. All operators have reduced their flight programs and many even completely suspended their flight operations without knowing when the situation will improve again.

Of course, when it became evident that the pandemic would hit aviation severely CEOs, CFOs and Accountable Managers started to develop scenarios and strategies for their companies to secure their survival. This involved fleet reductions, lay-offs, reduced working hours, contract suspensions, subsidised loans and many other measures that would save money, secure liquidity, and buy time.

Now that a loosening of the restrictions is in sight, operators start planning the steps for their return to service. However, companies that re-enter the market will look different than they did before. And the environment they return to will not be the same as it was before the crisis. The economic and legal parameters that govern our industry will have changed, cultural and social behaviour patterns will have changed, and consumers' decision-making considerations perhaps will have changed as well.

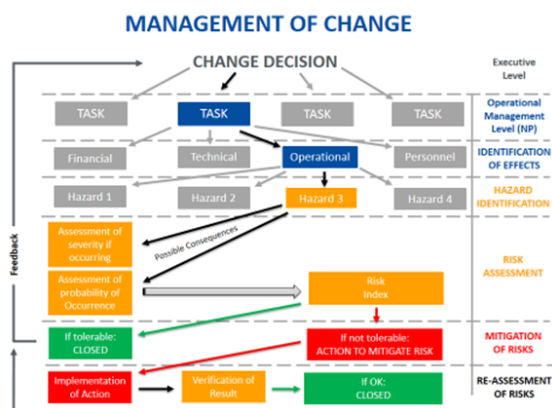


This is a lot of change that has to be managed. Besides other things such complex change requires intensive investigation of the routes and markets to concentrate on. It requires flexible and resilient financial planning, a well thought-of schedule to get personnel current and back to work, and open and clear communication with own staff and external stakeholders. Decisions on all these matters will have to be taken and executed.

Certainly, responsible aviation managers have considered the operational safety risks that may emerge from all these changes. The responsible manager must account for many key questions: Will my pilots still be proficient enough when they climb back into the cockpit? Will my flying schedule be robust enough? Will we have the maintenance personnel required to keep the aircraft maintained to the expected standard? Will we have the required support and services at our destinations? Will the lines of communication still work? Can I accept all the risks associated with the changes? These are only some of the questions that have to be considered. What if the answers reveal shortcomings?

Management of Change

Managing changes must include a formal assessment of the potential safety risks they induce and a plan on how to control them. Proper change management protects the company from dangerous and expensive surprises; it is also a legal requirement to have documented processes in place for the Management of Change (MoC), to apply these processes in a coordinated way and to record the results of the related activities (AMC1 ORO.GEN.200(a)(3)(e)).



Applied properly the Management of Change is a process that involves top management, line management and the subject matter experts within a company. It is a method for the predictive identification of hazards deriving from change using all available resources and expertise in the organisation. The MoC process furthermore provides a framework for assessing the risks, defining mitigation strategies and following-up on their execution. It makes the considerations and activities for risk mitigation traceable, preserve learnings and provides confidence in the own course of action.

Benefits of a well-designed MoC Process

Besides being able to demonstrate to customers, partners, Authorities, and other stakeholders that the return to service and the associated changes are based on robust safety considerations and decisions, air operators will enjoy multiple benefits from implementing solid MoC processes:

- A formal MoC gets responsible managers in control of the changes and risks.
- A systematic MoC makes sure that responsible managers have done everything needed and possible to navigate through the changes safely.
- With a standardised MoC operators do not need to worry about the legal compliance of their change management processes and results.
- A professional MoC can make the company come out of the corona crisis as a stronger organisation well prepared to stay ahead of the competition.

How to do it?

Introducing consistent MoC processes or revising existing processes is a demanding task which has to include various functions and roles: as a minimum the Accountable Manager must define the guidelines, the Safety Manager must add the risk assessment expertise, and the Nominated Persons and line managers must engage in the assessment of the activities they are responsible for.

The introduction of an MoC process framework will have to consider the following steps:

1. Designing the MoC process.
2. Describing procedures for the MoC process and including them in the company documentation.
3. Training affected staff on applying the procedures.
4. Testing the process and adjusting the procedures where necessary.
5. Implementing MoC processes in a swift, down-to-earth, realistic and safety-oriented way.

Experience shows that an “outside pair of eyes” is often the only way to objectively understand and effectively re-design existing company MoC processes. It is thus highly recommendable to seek assistance from specialists who have experience with change and turn-around management in aviation organisations. Independent experts will make it easier for responsible managers to detect strengths and deficiencies in the existing process framework and to build and document a reliable MoC process system. This will give them the confidence they need to concentrate on executing the necessary changes.

Another advantage of consulting external experts is that they are instantly available and do not need to be trained. Companies do not have to use internal capacities while having to work with own human resources reduced to the minimum needed to uphold operations.

MoC Outputs

An MoC process implementation project will, among other things, provide an organisation with the following outputs:

- Log of hazards deriving from planned changes
- Log of assessed and categorised risks to deal with following the changes
- Recommendations for actions to mitigate the risks
- Qualification of own personnel as masters of change
- Compliance documentation for the Authorities

The results of the MoC process will guide the air operator on its way out of the Covid 19 induced lockdown and will help to balance commercial needs against safety requirements.

Summary

The corona crisis is a big challenge for aviation related businesses, many of them fighting for survival. Business continuity requires a reaction to and management of the changes. Restructuring and other, possibly painful, but certainly healthy measures will change companies and their operations significantly.

In order to go through these changes and to control the associated safety risks, solid Management of Change (MoC) processes must be applied. Some companies will be able to introduce these processes with own resources and expertise; those that are not able to do so should seek advice from specialists that have knowledge of and experience with the subject matter.

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