

UPGRADE AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TRAINING AT AMERICAN AIRLINES

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(W. W. Estridge)

Three years ago, the American Airlines Captain Upgrade program constituted a detailed study of rules, policies and procedures. Special emphasis was placed on such subjects as Weather, Communication, Administration, etc., as published in a document entitled, Flight Manual Part I. This program was labeled, "Duties and Responsibilities" or "D & R." Naturally, in addition to the "D & R" training, each new Captain also completed a flight training program and the required rating rides in the left seat of the equipment he would be assigned to fly.

Originally, the "D & R" program was conducted by an instructor in a classroom/workshop format. However, many complaints about the program seemed to highlight the lack of standardization in the presentations. As a result, the program was produced on color video tape, using a panel format with the members being three of American's key Check Airman supervisors. The total video program required eleven hours of running time which was presented in forty minute sessions, each followed with a question and answer period.

This reduced the complaints concerning the "Duties and Responsibilities" program, but not to the point the training staff was satisfied. Therefore, it was decided that a survey was needed to determine the critical needs, or objectives, of the Captain's Upgrade program. Acting on that decision, a training development specialist visited several of the domicile bases and interviewed base management pilots and Captains, who had upgraded within the past year. The conclusions resulting from those interviews were:

1. Upgrading Captains averaged from ten to fifteen years with the company as cockpit crewmembers and had been exposed to the entire contents of Flight Manual Part I many times during their career. They believed a detailed review of the operational rules and policies could be accomplished by the individual through self-study.
2. Captains are advised they are an important representative of management, therefore it is absolutely necessary they become aware of the various company functions and programs that are in support of their day-to-day operation as pilot-in-command.
3. To assist new Captains in effectively directing the activities of other crewmembers, training was needed in Interpersonal Skills.
4. Proper importance should be afforded to the significant milestone in a pilot's career of being promoted to Captain.

To meet those identified objectives, a completely new Captain's Upgrade program was developed. The requirement to provide information on "various company functions and programs" was met by conducting the following presentations, all followed by question and answer periods.

Captain Ehmann and his immediate staff, during their presentations, mainly emphasize the importance of each Captain's new responsibility. They also outline major principles that Captains should consider in the decision making process as the Pilot-In-Command. The other speakers describe their major responsibilities and problem areas, and describe how they might be contacted and provide assistance to the Captains during future years.

1. Captain D. E. Ehmann, Vice President – Flight, and Staff
2. Air Traffic Control Director
3. Flying Operations Technical Director
4. Dispatch – Director
5. Crew Schedule – Director
6. Director – Flying Training
7. Director – Operational Engineering
8. Manager F/E Standards
9. Manager – Flight Service Training
10. AA General Manager DFW Airport
11. Manager – Aircraft Maintenance DFW Airport

In addition to those company functions, providing information on two supporting activities outside of the company seemed essential:

1. A visit to the Fort Worth Air Route Traffic Control Center where individual briefings are provided.
2. A presentation made by the FAA Principal Operations Inspector. This presentation covers compliance with FAR's, FAA's role in American Airlines' operations, etc.

In two one-half day sessions scheduled on the third and fourth days of the overall three and one-half day program, the recommended Interpersonal Skills training is conducted. During presentations on the first two days, several of the speakers, starting with Captain D. E. "Bud" Ehmann, Vice President – Flight, the importance of open two-way communications in the cockpit is emphasized. Also, the need for effective two-way communications with other supporting personnel is stressed: Cabin crewmembers, gate agents, maintenance, dispatch, etc.

The core of the Interpersonal Skills training is a five part 35mm color slide and audio program. This program was developed by American Airlines to train customer contact personnel – ticket agents, reservation agents, etc., and is titled TACT (Transactional Analysis in Customer Treatment). However, during the Captain Upgrade program the introduction and the discussions that follow the presentation of each part of the TACT program is directed to the cockpit work world. In terms of Transactional Analysis concepts the program discusses the make up of the personality, identified as three ego states. These ego states are identified colloquially as the PARENT, the ADULT, and the CHILD (P-A-C).

From that basis individual transactions between two people are analyzed. Following the discussions students are then given an opportunity to analyze several transactions presented in slide tape format. During the remainder of the program students learn additional concepts which help them to understand many of the common transactions occurring daily on the job.

To provide additional importance to the promotion to Captain, besides congratulations stated during the Flight Academy presentations, an attractive brochure is presented to each new Captain. On the cover, Captain's wings and the individual's name is embossed in silver. The first page is a letter of congratulations from Captain Ehmann and the remaining pages constitute a notebook outline of the entire program with adequate space for note taking during each presentation. This brochure is presented to the new Captain before leaving for the Flight Academy Training program.

A highlight of the program at the Flight Academy is a dinner for the class hosted by Captain Ehmann. This provides an added opportunity for emphasizing the availability and interest of Flight Management in the new Captain's point of view.

The fifth day is spent at American Airlines Maintenance and Engineering facility in Tulsa, Oklahoma. There, they receive a briefing by Mr. R. J. (Rocky) Masiello, Vice President M & E, and his staff, followed by a detailed tour of all M & E shops.

These briefings and tours provide the new Captains with an understanding of the complexities and thoroughness of the Company's maintenance and engineering responsibilities.

At this time the basic program is complete and each new Captain commences his Operating Experience phase. Upon completion he continues a normal schedule as **Pilot-In-Command**. Soon thereafter an important part of this new Captain Upgrade program is conducted – a two to three month line check. This provides an opportunity for an experienced Check Airman to answer any questions the new Captain may have and to put a final polish on his techniques and methods of being a Captain for American Airlines.

The concluding step of the Captain Upgrade program is a one day visit to the General Office in New York City. Approximately six months after the Flight Academy program, each new Captain is scheduled with seven to ten other new graduates to spend a day with Mr. Don Lloyd-Jones, Senior Vice President-Operations, and his staff. In view of recent line operating requirements, all new Captains have not had the opportunity to visit the General Office on schedule. However, it is believed this is an appropriate conclusion to our effective program and hopefully future upgrading Captains will have this day of important training.

Since the beginning of this Upgrade program, student critiques have consistently and with unusual enthusiasm praised the merits of this new approach. Therefore, plans are being considered for including segments of this program in the First Officer and New Hire programs.

(Mansfield)

When we were faced with the request on the part of the crewmembers and base managers that interpersonal skills training be included in the captain upgrade program, I felt we had to concern ourselves with two considerations in selecting what the training would be.

The first one was basically an assumption. That assumption is that most of the candidates in the captain upgrade program had not had any specific training in interpersonal skills, at least within the last 10 to 15 years.

The second one was a fact, and that's the elements of time constraints and resources. I think we are all faced with that in a profit-making organization. After participating this far in this particular symposium, I would certainly suggest that we have all our captains sit in on this kind of a discussion. That would be quite ideal, although not quite realistic.

Faced with that assumption and that particular fact, I finally chose a program that had been developed within my company, one that I had been using for some time in the check-airman training program. This program is a two-part program, taking 2-1/2 days, and it is built around a slide-tape program of which I'll show you part. Actually, it was put together to train customer contact people; it's one that's been in existence in American Airlines for some time. This program was developed to train the ticket agents, the reservations agents, those kinds of people that have a very short but very important contact with our customers, and that would include our flight attendants — the people that probably have the most effect on whether our customers come back the second time.

I think all of us, regardless of our company, certainly wish to strive for that kind of feeling in our people and in their transactions with customers.

As I stated, I've been using this program in the check-airman training, and in view of the need to find something that would address the subject of interpersonal skills in a rather short, concise way, this seemed appropriate.

The program is built around a method developed rather recently, called transactional analysis.

Now, how to tell you about this? I pondered on it a little. I could go through a long verbal description, but I thought probably the best way is to show you a couple of segments.

I'm actually going to show you the first segment exactly as it's presented to the captains. I precede the showing of that section with an introduction. I won't go through all of it, but one of the things I bring to their attention is that they've had 10 to 15 years of experience sitting in the other two seats, realizing full well the effect that the captain has on the tone, on the atmosphere, and on the working conditions that take place within the cockpit.

Secondly, I highlight the fact that in that uniform with those four stripes he also has considerable effect on the young people that come through the cabin door trying to conduct business in the cabin who are coordinating with the front end, with the maintenance man on the end of the pushback line, the dispatch clerk, the scheduler, and many other people within the company that are there to support the operation of getting our passengers safely from A to B.

With that, I then say let's use a vehicle called "transactional analysis" to talk about your work world, and that is exactly what we do.

So what I'd like to do is actually demonstrate a slide-tape portion of the program. I'm going to revert to a master slide changer and let the program now speak for itself.

Synopses of four of the tape programs used by American Airlines are given here:

Synopsis No. 1

The TACT Program opens with a Prologue which, through images and music, presents a day in the life of Everyman. After the student has inferred the dehumanizing aspects of life in a technological society, the narration commences with a reference to the bestselling book, I'M OK — YOU'RE OK, by Dr. Thomas A. Harris, which provides the behavioral theory (Transactional Analysis) around which the TACT Program revolves (Transactional Analysis in Customer Treatment).

The first teaching point is that the human brain functions like a high-fidelity tape recorder which stores our earliest experiences and feelings. These recordings are permanent; then cannot be erased. These past events and our original feelings about them replay today in response to *today's* stimuli, and the effects of these visits to our past are generally far greater than their duration which may be only a fraction of a second.

The next teaching point is that continual observation has supported the assumption that three ego states exist in all people. These ego states are identified colloquially as the *parent*, the *adult*, and the *child* (PAC). These three ego states comprise the personality, and each has a vital value for the human being. The *parent* and the *child* are recordings in the brain of *actual* experiences of external and internal events. The *adult* is a recording of data acquired and computed through exploration and testing.

Synopsis No. 2

In this portion of the course, the student observes the formation of the *parent*, *adult*, and *child* ego states in one little boy. The student also learns how the painful, civilizing process which this entails leads to the almost universal life position I'M NOT OK — YOU'RE OK.

The first teaching point is that the *parent* contains the taught concept of life; the mother and father become recordings inside the little person who observed them.

The next teaching point is that the *child* contains the felt concept of life, the responses of the small person to what he sees and hears. These events and feelings (primarily NOT OK feelings) also are recorded.

A third teaching point is that the *adult* contains the thought concept of life, the recording of data acquired from about 10 months on through exploration and testing. The *adult* is a data-processing computer that grinds out decisions after computing the information from three sources: the *parent*, the *child*, and the data which the *adult* has gathered and is gathering.

The decision I'M NOT OK — YOU'RE OK is, perhaps, one of the first functions of the infant's attempt to make sense out of life. Once his life position is decided, he has something to work with, some basis for predictability.

Synopsis No. 3

Having developed a language, we come to the central technique: using that language to analyze a transaction. The transaction consists of a stimulus by one person and a response by another, which response in turn becomes a new stimulus to which the first person responds. The purpose of the analysis is to discover which part of each person — *parent*, *adult*, and *child* — is originating each stimulus and response.

The student is first provided with physical and verbal clues for each ego state. This brings us to the first rule of communication in Transactional Analysis: When stimulus and response on the P-A-C transactional diagram make parallel lines ... the transaction can go on indefinitely. The second rule of communication is that: When stimulus and response cross on the P-A-C transactional diagram, communication stops. Examples of "parallel" and "crossed" transactions are provided.

The student is then given an opportunity to analyze several transactions. (Instructions for this drill are provided both in the taped narration and in a note to the script following Slide C.60.)

Following the taped exercises, a brief discussion is scheduled during which the discussion leader makes several comments concerning P-A-C

terminology, and requests the student to provide written examples of parallel and crossed transactions (one each) for discussion at the next session of the TACT program.

Synopsis No. 4

In this portion of the TACT program, the student learns additional P-A-C concepts which help him to understand many of the common transactions occurring daily on the job and elsewhere. These concepts are *stroking*, *trading stamps*, and *games*.

Stroking is literally essential for our early survival as infants. Today, *stroking*, in the form of recognition, is just as essential for our psychological well-being. Hence a *stroke* may be used as the fundamental unit of social action. An exchange of *strokes* constitutes a *transaction*, which is the unit of social intercourse.

Trading stamps symbolize the negative (dirty stamp) feelings and the positive (gold stamp) feelings that people save up to cash in for guilt-free prizes. Stamp redemption is one technique used by people to deal with their uncomfortable, NOT OK feelings.

Another technique used to deal with NOT OK feelings is *games*. *Games* are special, ulterior transactions programmed by the *child*. Such transactions differ from simple parallel or crossed transactions in that they operate on two levels, an ostensible or social level, and an ulterior or psychological level. Games are always resolved on the psychological level.

The student is then given examples of how *stroking*, *stamp collecting*, and *games* affect him on the job, and is shown how putting the *adult* in charge of a transaction can often stop a game from progressing to its payoff.

That's exactly how the program is designed in the first section, representing about one-fifth of the total slide presentation. At the conclusion of this particular section that we just listened to, we then have a discussion trying to relate to their work world some of the concepts introduced.

For instance, my first question usually refers to the prologue or the introduction, and I ask them what was the intent of that particular introduction. It takes a little while to get some answers started, but it's a pretty alert group, and it doesn't take them long to define that those were there to portray the experiences that take place in people's everyday life and some of the feelings associated with those kinds of experiences, both good and bad.

They do a good job describing the frustrations, the aloneness, the various other happenings that take place that generate, maybe unhappy, but some of them happy feelings that go along with the work day.

Following that I usually ask them what takes place in their workday that brings about those same kinds of feelings of frustration, etc. By this time

they can warm up rapidly, and I won't repeat all the responses I get, but some examples are "The captain I flew with last month," or "The day at the gate over which I had no control," and so on.

We then go into the actual concept of transactional analysis and discuss some parts of the program, the *adult*, *parent*, and *child* that's already been presented, and go into a little further development before the second part is presented.

In the second part the slide presentation addresses more of the how's and why's in the development of the three ego states, and what some of the clues are that you and I can observe. I realize I'm addressing this to people who may not know about transactional analysis, but we do go into detail because most of the captain candidates have not heard of this method, nor have they had any direct interpersonal skills training. After the second section is shown we again have a discussion period and it gets livelier as you go deeper.

The third part is the meat of the whole thing, so I'd like to show you about 2 or 3 minutes of that third part to give you an idea of how this program flows. [Slides were shown.]

As I stated, that's just a little segment of the third part of this particular program. And, again, following the conclusion of this we get into discussion in which there are some practice transactions.

The transactions, presently, are in the ticket agent's work life. We are designing some to be in the cockpit work life, but even as presently shown, the crewmen can relate very well to a ticket agent and transfer the event to the happenings that take place around them.

The fourth part of the program addresses other concepts of transactional analysis involving reinforcement, both positive and negative, and also some of the more complex transactions that Dr. Berne, the originator, has titled Trading Stamps, Games, etc.

I conclude the program with some practice transactions and a 30-minute film that summarizes the idea of transactional analysis, and does an excellent job of showing the role-playing of games that people get involved in on the job.

As to the success of the program, as Capt. Estridge said, we have presented this as part of the captain-upgrade program to about 700 candidates. Certainly the written and spoken critiques have been in large part favorable. I think the most important benefit is that it possibly makes each captain, or most of them anyway, a little more aware of how they might operate in transacting or dealing with other people, especially those people who are so crucial to the safe operation of an airplane, the cockpit crew first and certainly all the other supporting people.

Based on what I have observed as a result of including this in the upgrade program, I would like to see some extension of the approach. Possibly

this basic explanation and then some role playing, such as we do for our check-airmen. Then we hope that we can soon get into LOFT training where the effectiveness of transaction is discussed during the critique.

DISCUSSION

DR. LAUBER: I'm sure that these gentlemen will be happy to answer questions.

DR. TANNER, NASA: Do you have any thought of doing this on a recurrent basis?

MR. MANSFIELD: No, it hasn't been discussed. The only thing that might address what you are asking, is that we have thought of backing it up in time, as it were, because one of the first comments at the conclusion of the interpersonal skills training was, "Why did I have to wait to become a captain to get this kind of training?" So the thought was to insert that kind of training both in the first-officer upgrade and the new-hire program, at least for a period of 4-5 years, until we've covered everybody on the low end. Regarding the entire program in addition to the interpersonal skills, we have been challenged on how we can present this to captains who have already been upgraded. That challenge hasn't been met as yet.

CAPT. ESTRIDGE: A question that's often asked in the class by candidates is "Why didn't you give that to old Joe, he sure could have used it." And there's a good point to that. I'm firmly convinced — I'm absolutely convinced — that a hostile cockpit atmosphere, or even one that's uneasy, in which a free exchange of ideas and thoughts and responses are inhibited, is a dangerous cockpit. It's an accident looking for a place to happen. And there is a method to this madness, because this pays off, it works, and I hope we can develop it even a lot better than we have.

CAPT. FRINK, Pan Am: Have you any evidence to indicate that old Joes don't exist any more since this 7 years of application of this interpersonal skills program on the 700 new men that have gone through it?

CAPT. ESTRIDGE: I wish I could answer you in the affirmative and say old Joes don't exist, but they do. Of course, this has been just 3 years and we've done 700; that's only a third of the captain population.

CAPT. FRINK: But among this new group, do you still have some of the old Joe types even though they've seen this?

CAPT. ESTRIDGE: I guess we don't have positive feedback that all of them are performing 100 percent.

MR. MANSFIELD: A subjective response to that, which I've heard expressed by some of our base managers, especially those at the smaller bases and those bases where the new captains are going, is that they feel that it's effective, that it is helping. But that's a subjective judgment, and that's the best feedback I can provide.

CAPT. CARROLL, United Airlines: Thinking logistically of the numbers you say you have plowed through this program in 3 years, what's the frequency of the time you hold a command course, what are the numbers that are in the course? The reason I ask is that getting them all activated at the same time and in position to take this course at the same time, to go to Tulsa at the same time, and make the visit to New York at the same time becomes quite a problem. I'm concerned about it from the standpoint of some of the programs that we run, that is, of the availability of the principals, as an example, to be on scene to do this kind of thing. It's kind of a complicated question, but how often, and how many, and what do you do for the principals being there?

CAPT. ESTRIDGE: Well, it's triggered by the number of captain upgrades that we need for the airline. They are programmed into the flight academy on the basis of bids opening up, and it's just a matter of numbers. Logistically, they get there because we need them to fly in the left seat. It's averaged about 20 a month for the past 3 years in upgrade. As far as taking the program to the rest of the airline or taking these people to all of these functions that we described, such as the maintenance and engineering visit, we have been able to successfully do that except for the last class last week, which we weren't able to get into the engineering center. But the one part of the program we do have difficulty in scheduling is the general office visit downstream a month or two. That's sort of difficult to work because of the schedules of the individuals involved. It is a real problem, it takes a lot of effort, and it could be quite expensive.

MR. MANSFIELD: The general office visit has not been fully successful. We're hoping that with the general office move, we could schedule that kind of a visit as they come in, maybe each 6 months on their semi-annual recurrent session.

CAPT. TRAUB, United Airlines: Did you say that you had a 2-3 month line familiarization program?

CAPT. ESTRIDGE: No, the line familiarizations are the 25 hours done immediately after the upgrade checkout course, But then we have a follow-up of 2 to 3 months in that area line check of the new captains, in which a check-airman goes with him on several segments to take a look and discuss a lot of the good things that you'd want to reinforce at that time.

DR. TANNER, NASA: You mentioned that in the course of the TA training there are times when there's role playing by the candidate?

MR. MANSFIELD: No, it's just a discussion. What I said was, the first addition I'd like to make is role playing. For instance, in our check-airman training program we require certainly the same training as in the captain upgrade.

Secondly, within the check-airman's first year we try to schedule him for a 3 or 4-day workshop, conducted by the management training section.

In this workshop certain roles have been tailored for the flight department. It's done with the use of video playback and critique. That I would like to see also in the captain upgrade program.

MR. RANDALL, NASA: I can see a lot of advantages to what you're doing; I think it's very commendable. I think one of the main things you get out of it is happy employees who have probably a little better company orientation than they had previously, but do you see any evidence that they're better able to manage resources in the cockpit?

CAPT. ESTRIDGE: Yes, I think that's a direct fallout that we are able to observe. And the base flight managers, the check pilots, and the people who have observed them subjectively have reported that cockpit communications and interactions between crewmen are better than they were. It's rather interesting that there were a few specific individuals about whom they made observations to the effect that they have definitely made an improvement; there are a couple I would like to see improve even more.

MR. MANSFIELD: The other recommendation that I would like to see implemented is that we adopt the LOFT concept soon. There the decision-making process or crew coordination can not only be observed, but it also can be used to practice what we have taught prior to the LOFT training. In that way we can reinforce the training by providing experiences in something of a real-time setting. I think that addition is much needed.