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Anuarbek Sopay¹

¹SuleymanDemirel University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

CREW CONTROL DEPARTMENT RESTRUCTURING, WORKLOAD AND STAFF SATISFACTION IN THE AIRLINE

Abstract. Organizational change and restructuring is often followed with staff reduction which may bring occupational stress, impacting negatively on the psychological well-being of employees. Conversely, the purpose of new structure is to maintain all employees by sharing responsibilities and creating new roles. This study investigates increased workload of department which is result of less job satisfaction and the main problem is less effectiveness of Operational Department functioning. Current structure consists a total of 80 employees including 10 Crewing Duty Managers, 15 Senior Crew Controllers, 35 Crewing Officers, 15 Crew Support Officers and 5 Crew Logistics Officers. All mentioned positions were observed and interviewed during day-to-day operation.

The purpose of this article is to maintain all employees by sharing responsibilities and creating new roles. This study investigates increased workload of department which is result of less job satisfaction and the main problem is less effectiveness of Operational Department functioning. Organizational change and restructuring is often followed with staff reduction which may bring occupational stress, impacting negatively on the psychological well-being of employees.

Key words: restructuring, workload, positive and negative affect, airline industry.

Аңдатпа. Мақала мақсаты болып департамент жұмысын жақсарту үшін жұмыскерлер қызметтерін теңдей бөлу және жаңа жұмыс орындарын ашу болып табылады. Атаулы мақала департаменттегі жұмысбастылықты зерттейді, өйткені ол өз кезегінде, Оперативтік департаменттің жұмыс эффектілігін және жұмыскерлердің көңіл толушылығын азайтты. Қайта құру, көбінесе, жұмыскерлер санының азаюымен тұспа-тұс келеді, ол кәсіби қобалжулық тудырады және жұмыскерлердің ынтасына кер әсерін береді.

Кілттік сөздер: қайта құру, жұмысбастылық, позитивті және негативті әсерлер, әуе индустриясы.

Аннотация. Целью статьи является распределение обязанностей между работниками и создание новых позиции для улучшения работы. Данная работа исследует увеличенную нагрузку

департамента, что привело к наименьшему удовлетворению и к меньшей эффективности в работе Оперативного Департамента. Организационные изменения и реконструкция часто приводят к сокращению количества работников, что в свою очередь влияет на профессиональный стресс, также негативно сказывается на психологическом благополучии работников.

Ключевые слова: реконструкция, загруженность, позитивные и негативные влияния, авиационная индустрия.

Introduction

The Operations Centre (OC) is an important department in the Aviation Safety Operations division of the Airline. The primary role of the OC is to use the combined resources and knowledge of the departmental staff situated in the OC to maintain the published schedule and limit the effect of disruptions to the schedule. Schedule Monitoring includes monitoring flights, changing aircraft or schedule to meet commercial and regulatory demands, pre-empting schedule disruption, and schedule of aircraft resource optimization.

The Crewing department within the OC manages the rosters of the flight crew and cabin crew. Under the leadership of the Manager Crew Control and the Crewing Duty Manager, the staff works as a team to make collaborative decisions in the best interests of passenger safety and comfort while ensuring airline business interests are catered for. Through all operations, it is paramount that there is the prompt and accurate dissemination of operational information to relevant partners to support collaborative decision making within the OC.

By this research the author wants to show that the current structure of department is not effective anymore as to rapidly growth of the Airline industry. As a result, a workload is increasing accordingly. One of the Manager's responsibility is monitoring the workload of staff to make a restructure if it requires. The impact of the same structure with increasing workload can reduce work performances and affect the safety of flights, cost, compliances, operation integrity, staff and flight crew satisfaction.

There is some literature that focuses on general information about Operations Control "IATA Airline Cost Conference, Geneva 2014", however internal organization of Airlines is absent due to confidentiality. Despite this other literature were studied such as Ronald J. Burke "Hospital restructuring, Workload, and Nursing Staff satisfaction and Work Experiences" [1] and James Warren D. "Relationships between airline employee morale, motivation, and leadership communication during organizational restructuring: A correlation study" [2]. According to mentioned studies it was found that quantitative workload is a consistent stressor in the department. In addition, authors investigated that workload is

one of the main significant predictors which affects to less effectiveness, stress, less performance, staff satisfaction, and burnout. Post-restructuring is not less important as it takes place on employee mental condition. Social Support, Positive and Negative affect need to be considered before proceeding with new structure of department or organization. This has been found in study of Vivien Swanson and Kevin Power “Employee’s perceptions of organizational restructuring: the role of social support[3].

The aim of this research is to find out the main problems of current Crew Control Department structure. Then, based on analysis to suggest a new vision of department structure which will meet all the requirements to increased workload. The rest of the study is structured as follows: section 2 describes theoretical framework used in this study; section 3 introduces methodology for analyzing quantity of current structure; section 4 key results and findings of the analyses are presented; section 5 contains discussion and a summary of the conclusion.

Theoretical framework

This study applies the main workload problems that were the undertaken in the research of Ronald J. Burke “Hospital restructuring, Workload, and Nursing Staff satisfaction and Work Experiences”[1]. This work indicates that overloading leads to frequent mistakes, fatigue and dissatisfaction with his/her position. The increasing workload without the necessary resources and support from colleagues leads even to health problems. With regard to Crew Control department under study, this may be the main cause of such major problems as flight delays, illegal planning of crew for flights and most importantly, may cause risks for flight safety. Likewise, J. Burke evaluated such important factors as job satisfaction, work effectiveness, errors and coordination that can also be applied in Crew Control department [1].

The research results of work “Employees' perceptions of organizational restructuring: The role of social support” of Vivien Swanson and Kevin Power[4] specify that Senior Officers and Managers are more involved in work and receive more stress than industrial employees, what is similar to airline.

In the modern world, the concept of restructuring is interpreted as a ‘downsizing number of employees’ [5], but this leads to a conflict of interest, greater workload and job dissatisfaction of surviving workers post-restructuring, which cannot be applied in Crew Control Department. For this reason, it was decided that division of duties and responsibilities are the most optimal ways to reduce the workload and to run operation more efficiently. It was revealed that restructuring and reorganization lead to more efficient and coordinated work [4]. For work improvement, it is very important for junior staff to get support and knowledge from managers and

co-workers [6], which is now impossible in Crew Control department due to high workload. In present study it will be analyzed how it can be solved.

Methodology

Shift working positions:

There are many different tasks to be completed on a daily basis in Crew Control. To make identification and tracking streamlined the following positions are observed:

Crewing Duty Manager leads and manages the Crewing and Crew Support teams with the following functions:

- Crewing (day 1 and 2 – i.e. today’s and tomorrow’s operation)
- Pre-ops Crewing (day 3 to end of the published roster)
- Crew Help Desk

Senior Crewing Officer is the shift leader for the 24-hour Crewing and Crew Support teams. They are responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of Crewing and are a key stakeholder in the operational decisions that are made within the Control Center.

Crewing Officers are responsible for monitoring operational crew compliance and making changes to crew rosters <48 hours prior to flight report time in line with legality standards and Company business rules. The current tasks of Crewing officers are filled as follows: task 1 – Coverage; task 2 – Notifications; task 3 – Support for Desk 1 and 2; task 4 – Emails and Tickets; task 5 – Validations.

Crew Logistics Officer is responsible for ensuring all hotel accommodation; flights and surface transport are in place for all Company operational crew. Additionally, they are responsible for the processing and transmission of all crew Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) data.

Crew Support Officers (helpdesk) maintains flight and cabin crew operational records.

The research uses mainly observation to cover all current positions of Crew Control Department during day-to-day operation. In particular, each position was practiced during peak hours in order to estimate workload. In addition, some questionnaires were designed to make short interview in order to collect information about workload and staff satisfaction.

Evaluation list for observation:

Workload rate: workload of each position is different. It has been rated from 1 to 5, where is 1 -very less; 2 - less; 3 - medium; 4 - high; 5 - very high.

Performance: related to errors and mistakes, respondents have been indicated how often (1–never; 2-infrequently; 3-frequently) each of incident had occurred involving them over the past year. Incidents included “delay or cancellation of the flight”, “short crew compliment for particular flight”, “crew legality”.

Effectiveness: the quality of crew control department has been measured within Operation Center (1-poor; 2-satisfied; 3-excellent)

Speed: how fast the team react and solve day-to-day disruption (1-slow; 2-medium; 3-fast)

Teamwork: collaboration of the team measured (1-poor; 2-satisfied; 3-excellent)

Staff interview: staff has been interviewed by following 5 questions:

1. Is it necessary to restructure Crew Control department?
2. What is your vision of new structure?
3. Describe the workload according to your position.
4. What is the main problems you face in day-to-day operation?
5. Which position is the busiest in the department?

Results

Observation has been done in 5 different shift with a total of 56 employees which is 70% of all staff in Crew Control Department. The rest 30% were absent due to different reasons such as vacation, sickness, shift swap etc (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Observation evaluation



According to above Graph 1, the following problems have been found:

1. Crewing Duty Manager – is more involved to operations processes rather than administration work due to increased workload. Workload is too high for only one Senior Crew Controller on shift.
2. Senior Crew Controller – is responsible to find solutions for any giving situation related to Crewing, liaison with stakeholders and lead a team at the same time. One Senior Crew Controller could not manage operation physically, and it delays work of other stakeholders due to long respond. The risk of making mistake and missing an important information (which sometimes needs to be done in a very short time) is

very high. Most of the tasks cannot be delegated to Crewing Officers due to less responsibilities and qualification.

3. Crew Controller – has fewer responsibilities compare to Senior Crew Controller. In case of Senior absences, Crew Controller does not have enough authority and experience to respond to other stakeholders, especially OC. Also whenever there are big disruptions, Crew Controller cannot assist with an operation such as flying duty period calculation, suggestions of aircraft changes, flight delays, finalizing layover crew routes.
4. Crew Support Officer – the busiest periods are during many departures (morning 05:00-07:00 am/pm and 11:00-01:00 night time). The rest of the time they do not have much work. As a result, in department a surplus of the current position.
5. Crew Logistics position – if there is no replacement of current position due to sickness, vacation etc. crew controller (Task 4) must take Logistics responsibilities. Adding Logistics responsibilities to Desk for leads to overload and the main problem is that Crew Controller is not as efficient as Crew Logistics Officer which affects to obsess quality and quantity of the work.

Interview results. Most repetitive answers are taken into consideration.

Question 1. Restructure of the department is necessary due to continues growth of the company.

Question 2. Responsibilities of Seniors need to be shared within a team to give other staff more independence.

Question 3. Workload of each position is different. According to employees it depends from peak hours and disruptions. In general, workload is high as airline became giant in aviation industry.

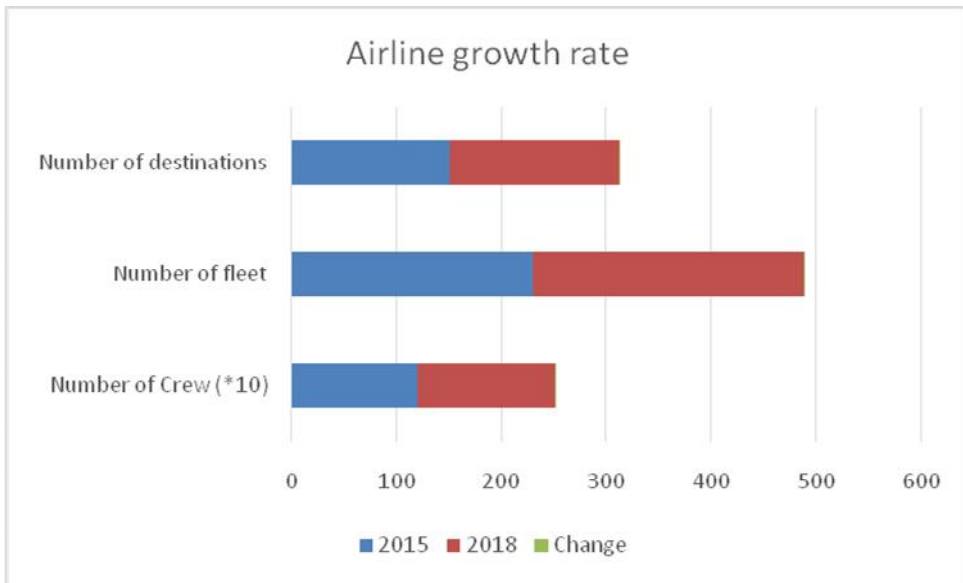
Question 4. The main problem is communication and teamwork within department. Seniors take care of all disruptions and most of the time other staff are not aware of main events during the shift.

Question 5. It can be noticed by the all positions that Senior Crewing Officer is the busiest position in the department.

Conclusion

Airline is one of the fastest growing industry in the world. For instance, one of the biggest airline in the world is Emirates[7]. Emirates has been grown more than 161 destinations worldwide with 13000flight crew (Picture 1). The airline fleet consist of the 258 aircrafts. This growth is shown in the picture 1 according to the airline statistic from 2015-2018 years[8].

Picture 1 Airline Growth Rate (2015-2018)



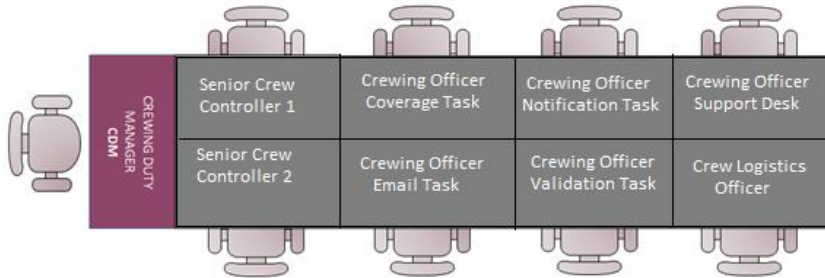
Workload of department linked to above mentioned 3 factors. The increasing number of aircrafts and destinations bring more disruptions to day-to-day operation and requires particular amount of the crew members. The increased amount of the crew directly influence on the workload as Crew Control is only department responsible for the crew scheduling. Based on this growth new structure needs to be designed in order to improve effectiveness, performance, speed of the team. The main goal is to avoid fatigue of the crew as it is one of the factors to maintain high standards of Safety.

Results from the picture “Graph 1” shows that higher positions such as Crewing Duty Manager and Senior Crew Controller have more responsibilities. Only these roles have authority and enough qualification to find solutions to any given situation. The rest of the staff (Crewing Officer, Crew Logistics Officer and Crew Support Officer) of the department do routine work and cannot make an important decision on his or her own without involving Seniors. Accordingly, Seniors are distracted to assist a team which enhance their workload. In addition, junior staff performance and contribution declines due to staff satisfaction. For instance, the routine work and less responsibilities leads to the fact that employee loses interest and enthusiasm to the work. The involvement of the junior staff needs to be appreciated and taken into account that they can do more difficult work. Junior staff should be closer to practical situations where they can improve and train their problem solving, ability to analyze and finding solutions. This fact should be dropped insofar as success of the company rely to its own staff.

Crew Control department should be structured according to current enlarged workload (Picture 2), where main factors such as teamwork,

sharing responsibilities, delegation and involving each member of a team will help to run operation more effectively. Respectively, new vision of the department shared below based on the analyzes (Graph 1), continues airline growth (Picture 1) and above mentioned problems.

Picture 2 Crew Control Department structure



Based on the analyze (Graph 1), it can be seen that Senior Crew Controller is most affected from high workload. Therefore, one more Senior Crew Controller has been added to share responsibilities. Senior Crew Controller 1 will be responsible for daily operation and most priority tasks (communication with OC and disruptions which need to be solved in a short time). Senior Crew Controller 2 will handle an important task too, but with less priority such as suggestions of aircraft changes, flight delays and finalizing crew routes (which can be delegated to Crewing Officer if Senior is busy). Also, Seniors will be able to respond Crewing Officer whenever requires.

Crewing Officer tasks are kept, however Crewing Officer “Support Desk” must not be uncovered. This position will assist any desk or Senior, but priority has to be given to “Coverage” and “Notification”. Crewing Officers have been given additional responsibilities to finalize layover routes, provide flight time period legality, delay flights and update crew data. By these extra tasks they will be more qualified and able to run operation during Seniors absence.

Crew Logistics responsibilities will be shared with Crew Support Officer. In case of shortage they can be replaced.

Referring to graph 1, Crew Support Officer workload is high only during peak hours and the rest of the time they have less work. Therefore, two Crewing Support Officers are kept instead of three. Extra Officers will be promoted to Crewing Officer position through HR process. Remaining two officers have been given additional tasks to action crew swaps and as mentioned above to be trained Crew Logistics task.

As a result, Crewing Duty Manager will not be involved to day-to-day operation, but advice can be taken if it requires. CDM can focus on administration work and to lead a team for better performance, effectiveness, teamwork, feedback, trainings etc. Senior Crewing Officer task will be less busy and less stressful. They will also have more time to

assist and train a team. Crewing Officers will have more responsibilities which helps diversifies routine work. Crewing Officer Support desk will share tasks to take some workload either from other Crewing Officers or Seniors. Crew Logistics and Crew Support Officers will be closer to day-to-day operation.

The study takes into account only particular airline structure. This research cannot be representative to whole airline industry. Different airlines have different workload and structure of one airline is not suit to another.

For the future research it requires experienced and knowledgeable Crew Control staff who knows how department works. Moreover, post restructuring can be analyzed in order to improve some aspects.

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