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Air Canada Maintenance mentorship program shaping future generations of Aircraft Maintenance Engineers



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As the saying goes, nothing replaces real-world experience. And with nearly 40 years of service each at Air Canada, Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AME) Brian Krist and Dale Corrigan have that in spades.

So when, in 2014, Air Canada Maintenance (ACM) identified a need to hire hundreds of new AMEs over the next few years, the two were instrumental in setting up a mentorship program that has helped all new hires integrate seamlessly into the company.

By 2015, Brian – joined by Dale shortly after the program was off the ground – had put in place a comprehensive training program for line maintenance with the goal of teaching all the key skills required to perform the job in a safe and efficient manner.

"We also wanted to encourage a strong work ethic for our new employees," Brian said. "We felt the best way to accomplish that was to use a mentor who would leverage his industry experience."

The program uses a combination of real-world hands-on training and classroom sessions to transfer the knowledge to the new AMEs being hired. The program was also geared toward making safety a top priority for AMEs at Air Canada.

Brian and Dale say the program is standardized and allows the progress of each new hire to be easily tracked.

Each mentor is paired to four or five new hires, and they will remain together for roughly two months. Since 2015, close to 300 people have completed the program, and there are five permanent mentors.

"Brian and Dale took ownership of the mentorship program and made it what it is today – a key part of our training for all new hires. We have even leveraged the concept and have applied it to a continuous learning program for our management team," said Brad Warren, Managing Director of Line Maintenance at Air Canada.

The program is continually evolving and being adapted to reflect new technology, such as ACM's [increased use of tablets](#) to make maintenance more efficient.

While a lot of the new hires have previous experience with other companies, the training is an eye opener for them, Brian says.

"When we realize that some of these guys have actually been in the business for 30 years with other companies and in other countries, and they say 'wow, this is the best program we have seen,' that is a great source of pride," Brian said.

For Brian and Dale, being able to transfer their extensive knowledge to a new generation of AMEs is a key goal for them.

"I have been very fortunate during my long career to have been mentored and taught by some talented and skilled individuals. This is a tremendous opportunity for me to pass those skills onto the next generation," Brian said.

"The biggest achievement of this project is opening the eyes of the new mentees and hopefully bringing them on and giving them a spark," Dale said. "Some of the personal satisfactions I have had is seeing people come alive, realizing that they are AMEs and really wanting to strive to be as good as they can be."

Brian believe the program has been critical in helping new AMEs do the work better.

"It's been instrumental in introducing new skillsets and developing the talents and troubleshooting abilities of our new hires. And made it a little easier for them to troubleshoot and repair the aircraft," Brian said.

Some of the AMEs who have gone through the program agree.

"The mentorship program here at Air Canada Maintenance was really good. It helped me get up to speed in a comfortable environment where I wasn't stressed out and expected to be producing right away. And I got to learn without the fear of making any big mistakes," said Jonathan Flynn.

He said Brian and Dale were huge helps.

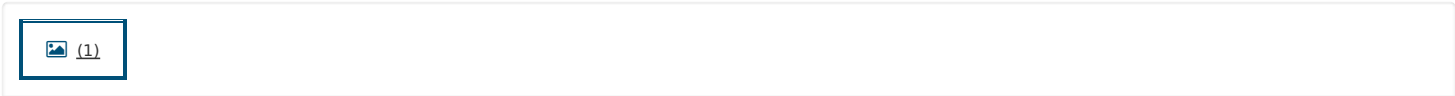
"They set the tone for how we should operate here," Jonathan said. "Their personalities were fun and they broke the ice right away, and really emphasized enjoying your time at work."

AME Vladimir Romanov went through the mentorship program in 2015 and is now called upon to fill in as a mentor on occasion.

"The best part of this program, I would say, is the very close proximity to someone very senior, very knowledgeable, very experienced," Vladimir said. "You want to have that kind of relationship built up first and, with that confidence level, experience level, it helps you to grow. Because essentially our industry is a tribal knowledge. It's a knowledge that passes from one generation of aircraft maintenance engineers to the next."

Even with previous experience working on aircraft, the ACM mentorship program is extremely beneficial to new hires, Vladimir believes.

"I would describe this program as a fresh start. We all come from different backgrounds, different experiences and different knowledge levels. It will take what you have already and build from that to an Air Canada standard, which will allow you to grow from that point on."



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