

Helicopter fleet availability improves with new maintenance practices.

Client:

One of the largest helicopter fleet operators in the world, with thousands of employees and maintenance bases across the globe. They provide transportation services to the oil & gas industry, and repair and overhaul services for civilian and military helicopter fleets.

Challenge:

Facing a very competitive landscape, the company had an urgent need to improve its customer service, increase equipment availability, and dispatch reliability. Improving their performance would not only enable them to win more business, and retain existing clients, but would also yield financial gains from reduced penalties and buy-backs.

Their maintenance operation was being centralized but it was still in the early stages, so the supervisors in the hangar were still working in a reactive mode. Lack of effective production control was adversely impacting maintenance work attainment to schedule, and an absence of long-term planning, and conflicts between maintenance bases, led to frequent material shortages. These factors, combined with poor workplace organization, resulted in diminished levels of engineer productivity, while substandard delivery of maintenance work diluted maintenance capacity and reduced aircraft operational availability.

Process:

Working in conjunction with the client, we quickly developed a project plan to look into the planning and hangar execution areas, along with material logistics. Early work focused on the hangar's 24/7 planning and operation. Using system flows, the joint team was able to identify gaps in both processes, which were then prioritized for improvement.

We used Project Charters to help close these gaps and to accelerate various improvement initiatives. Joint teams of USCCG and client staff members focused on eleven key areas, using Kaizen and other tools to help deliver the desired outcomes.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were established for the main areas so that base-line performance could be determined and improvement measured as the Charters took effect and implemented their recommendations. Through the Charters, and involvement of the engineers with some of the teams, a number of potential solutions were developed. Each of these was tested in the hangar so that the end result would be a more robust implementation that would sustain the targeted results.

Performance Results:

- 6% improvement in aircraft availability
- 6% improvement in dispatch reliability
- 90% reduction in penalties
- 85% reduction in buy-backs
- 17% improvement in weekend tasks attained
- 40% improvement in weekend cycle time attainment

Conclusion:

Availability and dispatch reliability improved to such an extent that their clients positively noted the significant improvement in aircraft availability and reliability, whereas usually, they only called to complain. From the clients' perspective, this was as much a measure of success as was the attainment of their KPIs.