



LEARNING FROM ONLINE TEAM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

As much training has moved online, what might we learn from this for team resource management? **Emmanuelle Gravalon** reports on the French experience.

In France, team resource management (TRM) courses for ATCOs were introduced in 2000 as a form of experience sharing. The stated objectives were to:

- remain vigilant when it comes to the 'human factors' risks for ATC, in order to maintain safe individual and collective behaviours
- learn from experience (to better understand our own experiences and those of others) to develop and improve risk management on a local and national level, and
- foster safe individual and collective behaviour and to improve the culture of safety through feedback and experience sharing.

To achieve these objectives, the TRM facilitators provide theoretical contributions from cognitive science,

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sociology and ergonomics in order to better understand individual and collective behaviours.

The courses are much appreciated by controllers. Experience sharing enriches each controller's experience by exchanging information about situations and sharing the resolutions. This helps to identify problematic situations earlier, and to generate a larger range of possible resolutions.



Virtual TRM Training

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, at the beginning of March 2020, DSNA (the French ANSP) decided to stop all ATCO non-operational gatherings, and thus stopped all continuous training, including TRM courses. This was a problem but also an opportunity. It gave us the chance to use our 20 years of experience of TRM differently. We had to come up with new forms of training.

So, a team of eight TRM facilitators from various centres reviewed and organised 'stress and fatigue management' materials from different TRM courses into an e-learning course for small groups via Zoom. The plan was to have one HF facilitator and three ATCOs from different centres, with an expected duration of two and a half hours. The regulator agreed.

We started with a first group of 15 ATCOs (five groups of three). For each session, ATCOs from different airports and ACC were carefully mixed so that they could exchange their experiences. Test sessions were held beforehand to check connections and hardware used by trainees. The first virtual TRM course was provided by one HF facilitator while two other HF facilitators were there as support/observers.

We validated this new temporary and mandated way of TRM sessions. In total, 138 French ATCOs have attended 45 Zoom sessions between April and July 2020.

The positives

The feedback has been good, even very good. The HF facilitator team is unanimously praised for their enthusiasm and kindness. The trainees are happy to try something new (and useful for their licences).

More specifically, the first feedback we got from the trainees and the HF facilitators was that it is better to have

two facilitators. This proved pertinent when the first problem with the internet occurred. When one HF facilitator speaks, the other one can keep an eye on the trainees' reactions or can answer via the chat window. The second feedback was that three trainees was a good number. Each can speak without any problem. This is fewer trainees than would be the case in a course. The third and perhaps most important feedback is that it was good to meet people from others' centres, who wouldn't have met otherwise.

The TRM facilitators also appreciated working in a team with people from different centres, sharing different backgrounds and competences. They developed new facilitation skills. Each time we had

the chance to facilitate TRM sessions for ATCOs with different backgrounds (tower, approach and ACC) we could experience fruitful exchanges. This was helpful to get a comprehensive view of all the different aspects of the job.

This enriched vision of the ATC system facilitates cooperation and interaction between the various entities involved in air traffic safety, and was more difficult to achieve with in-person TRM.

The negatives


This COVID-forced experiment had several advantages, but few trainees wanted to keep this virtual method in the long term. Most missed the real meeting with discussions and various activities. Some HF facilitators noticed the difficulty in organising such events and the technical fragility of the system. The sharing of more varied experiences is counterbalanced by the small number of participants and covered subjects. The technical fragility of internet connections and the use of individual or private hardware is also a limitation for more intensive implementation.

The Future

We will need experience sharing again to quicken the safe building of the post-COVID ATC world, which promises new methodologies (free route for example), new rules, new traffic flows and new technical systems. We need to share our varied experiences as widely and quickly as possible to face all these simultaneous changes safely and build renewed competencies.

As the Head of the French TRM facilitators' network, my hope is to be able to retain some of the benefits of

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virtual TRM. In particular, we need more experience sharing between ATCOs with various professional backgrounds and also between other stakeholders, ATSEP, managers and pilots, both in-person and virtually. 



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