

International Air Transport Association (IATA)

By Dylan McGuire

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is recognized as a successful PMI Registered Education Provider (R.E.P.). In partnership with more than 450 global training organizations, IATA's industry professional development programs in the aviation, cargo, and travel and tourism sectors are delivered to over 92,000 industry specialists and students every year.

IATA started its first industry training initiative back in the early 1970s. It founded the IATA Training and Development Institute (ITDI) in 2004 to develop the project management skills of air transport industry professionals worldwide. Its programs provide aviation professionals and their organizations tools to keep pace with the complex challenges of their industry. It currently offers unique courses and diploma programs that integrate IATA's global air transport expertise with the good practices and principles of the *PMBOK® Guide*.

IATA first recognized the value of project management in the early 2000s when it created a Project Management Office (PMO). By implementing the use of project management organization wide, the PMO enabled IATA to achieve its strategic objectives of enhancing the passenger experience; minimizing the impact of air transport on the environment; helping airlines to operate economically; and continuously improving safety standards.

"In the case of project management, we realized that our industry is replete with a vast array of projects—from airlines trying to acquire a new aircraft to airports building new terminals, for example—with everyone using different methods," says Ismail AlBaidhani, Head of Global Partnerships and Learning Innovation at ITDI.

Mr. AlBaidhani said that the ITDI program was created in order to help those in the industry help themselves.

ABOUT IATA

An international trade body created over 60 years ago, IATA today represents some 240 airlines whose combined flights comprise 84 percent of global air traffic. Its mission is to represent, lead and serve the airline industry.



IATA has developed international standards for passenger and cargo airlines in 150 countries worldwide. One of its key industry priorities is to develop initiatives for airline members that simplify processes and increase passenger convenience, while reducing costs and improving efficiency.

It has long been a major proponent of project management.

One such project was the global introduction of electronic ticketing. Due to IATA's efforts, paper tickets are practically gone from the industry, making ticketing faster, more efficient and more secure.

“As an association of airlines and air transport, we thought that sharing the best methodologies of PMI would be the best thing to do—and we did it through effective knowledge transfer and efficient training,” adds AlBaidhani.

Those individuals who completed ITDI’s project management training program can earn the *IATA Project Management Diploma*. Generally they are existing or new project managers as well as project team members. However, more advanced project managers and sponsors have also enrolled in the ITDI courses.

“It’s a mix of people really, and from the different aviation value chains” says Mr. AlBaidhani.

The courses are taught by a group of experts with extensive experience in project management in an aviation context. ITDI applies blended learning methods where attendees can study at any of nine IATA Training Centers or 50 partner locations worldwide. They can also receive in-house company training, that is customized to individual organizations, at their workplace.

The first course offered as part of the ITDI program was Project Management Essentials, which continues as the flagship of the program. After its success, IATA launched a program management course, followed by an advanced project management course. Later, after requests from government and non-governmental organizations, ITDI launched a contracts and procurement management course.

To date, there are over 700 graduates of IATA’s project management diploma program. Some organizations that have taken advantage it include: Air Traffic & Navigation Services (ATNS), South Africa; the UN Mission to East Timor; Vilnius Airport, Lithuania; Kenya Airways, Kenya; and JSC Air Astana, Kazakhstan.

Mr. AlBaidhani says that many organizations have experienced successful project outcomes and impacts due to their involvement in the ITDI program. For example, he says, starting in 2010, Kenya Airways enrolled a number of its employees in the IATA project management program—60 of whom earned their IATA diploma. As a result, the company met its strategic goal of becoming part of the Oneworld Alliance. It also successfully obtained and integrated new aircraft for its new operations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Kenya Airways also reports that it has used project management to streamline its information systems, thereby allowing it to deliver projects on time and on budget. It has also applied project management to its route startup and development engineering initiatives, which have both been successful, the company reports.

Mr. AlBaidhani says that because it is an R.E.P., IATA is now called upon by various key stakeholders around the world to assist with their aviation projects.

“If an airline or airport is going to launch a major project they usually contact us for training to start with. And we are able to help them afterwards with other things to help their project team deliver on their project mandate,” he says. He recommends that other aviation companies consider the PMI R.E.P. program as an important tool for integrating and recognizing project management methodologies within their organizations in order to meet their strategic goals.

SURVEY SHOWS BENEFITS OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

In 2014, IATA released the results of a survey given to students who participated in its project management training program. According to those who responded, the top three most common impacts of the training on their organizations were increased revenue, followed by reduced cost, and improvement in the industry's overall health and regulatory environment.

The survey also reported:

- Roughly half of those who responded said that more than half of their projects were successful.
- The large majority of respondents said that the IATA project management training improved the success of their projects.
- Most respondents gave a three out of four when asked to rate how beneficial their IATA project management training was in fulfilling their current role or responsibilities.

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