

# Working effectively in the aviation industry with aborigines



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## Working Effectively in the Aviation Industry with Aborigines in Australia

As the aviation industry in Australia is ever growing, its importance is also due to the fact that Australia is located on an island. This means that aviation, along with the shipping industry, provides the only means of connection to the rest of the world. Around 16 million passengers come to Australia yearly and 90% of them travel through air. The total number of licensed pilots in Australia now are about thirty thousand six hundred and seventy six with about one thousand seven hundred licensed helicopter pilots. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is responsible for the safety of aircrafts and passengers and to overlook the entire aviation industry.

All institutions are based on their professional cultures which are formed by different people who form the basis of that industry. The Australian aviation system is formed by people of different ethnicities and backgrounds. Like any other industry, its professional culture is heavily affected by Australia's national culture. Starting from the native Australians to the modern-day immigrants, all form the basis of Australia's aviation industry.

While institutional racism is prevalent in Australia, this practice in the aviation industry is much less common. (Race and racism in Australia, 1988). Institutional racism refers to the way beliefs are incorporated in the social system that results in discrimination against a certain minority group. It also includes any activity; words or actions that may be derogatory to a certain group of people. (It's just how you've been brought up! An Aboriginal perspective on the relationship between the law, racism and mental health,

2001). Often times, institutional racism is covert or even unrecognized by the agents involved in it. Like every other workplace, institutional racism against aborigines in Australia is an important issue. At the same time, some writers may be biased about the role of aborigines in aviation industry, rendering them as formless, transitory, and today undefinable in character. (“ Local Group Composition Among the Australian Aborigines: A Critique of the Evidence From Fieldwork Conducted Since 1930,” 1970). Another point that they raise is that aborigines are not fond of adapting to the new system. They would rather not work in an environment where they have to adapt. There is also a communication gap, which makes it difficult for the aborigines to adjust.

Despite the popular trend and literary proofs, it has been observed that racism in Australia is within bounds. Aborigines along with other ethnic groups are given a fair chance to play effective roles at every organizational level. While there may be a communication gap, the importance of teamwork is recognized by all groups and applied at every level. It is well recognized and understood by all employees that the basis of their organization lies in the teamwork and mutual respect of every individual. The main job of the aviation industry is to facilitate their passengers and ensure their safety and to take them to their respective destinations despite their differences in class, caste and financial status. It is said that the safety and efficacy of the aviation industry is based on three cultures, its national, professional and organizational culture and all three shape how the aviation industry performs nationally and globally. (Helmreich, 1998.)

For any organization to excel, it must overcome its cultural tendencies that are hindering its progress and strive to work effectively in a team-based environment. It is essential to recognize that everyone has their own designated roles in an organization. Like how a pyramid cannot stand without its base, an organization cannot stand without its employees. This is why the aviation industry in Australia is blooming. Because despite their differences they realize that they have a single goal.

My experience in communicating and working with people from different ethnic backgrounds has always been positive. Since it has only been my first year as an aviation student, I have yet to have the opportunity to work alongside an Aboriginal person.

However, the following is an example of how I think culture can affect communication effectiveness and the hazards that can happen as a result. During the stall-training lesson of my flight training, I was heading back towards Parafield Airport with my instructor, who is an Australian national without an Aboriginal background. I decided to use the Torrens Island Power Station as a reference point towards Parafield and fly into its direction. Shortly before passing over the power station, the instructor quickly instructed me to change my heading and diverted the aircraft south of the power station. After the flight, I was reprimanded for inducing the potential to damage the aircraft. It was at that point, I learnt that the exhaust of the power station had the potential to damage the aircraft's airframe, or even worse cause the aircraft to disintegrate mid-air. If that had occurred, the results would be disastrous with the debris of the plane falling down and causing great damage to Outer Harbor. Had I disregarded my instructor's <https://assignbuster.com/working-effectively-in-the-aviation-industry-with-aborigines/>

judgment, I may have caused massive damage to Outer Harbor with my aircraft. In the aviation industry, safety always comes first. If a pilot disregards safety in his or her judgment, disaster and casualties occur. This also shows the importance of communication and why effective communications is absolutely necessary in aviation industry. A small case of miscommunication may have hazardous impact, ranging from the bursting of the aircraft to causing damage to heavily crowded places, leading to loss of lives in both cases.

This also creates hurdles for Thai people like myself who are not upfront about the problems and hesitate to talk to their seniors about problems. Thais generally like to be on top of their games and would rather not ask questions and lose face in front of their seniors. This may cause a huge communication gap, like in the example above. Had I not talked to my senior about the problem, we may have caused huge damage to the harbor.

So far, I haven't worked with anyone from aboriginal background. But I would love to experience working with them. Although we may experience some communication gaps, we share a similar goal: excelling in the service we provide to passengers and ensuring safety for the aircraft, passengers and crew that are aboard. With this in mind, we can work and learn from each other.

Safety has been IATA's number one priority and they encourage aviation the industry to take all steps to ensure safety of all people involved in the aviation industry. A study done in New Zealand shows that pilots regard luck as an important factor in the safety of the aircraft (Gill, 2004). I however

think that effective communication skills and following SOP guidelines is more important than just good luck. Another study has been done to measure safety in high reliability organizations (HROs) using the traditional measures of incident and accident reporting during periods of deliberate organizational change (Lofquist, 2010). This also encourages the promotion of healthy environment and importance of team work, and how effective teamwork can overcome all sorts of hurdles, may it be language barriers or communication gaps.

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