

Why Should You Come to the MMC in Cleveland?

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The Travel Budget Conundrum: Has this happened to you? You submitted your travel request to go to the Avionics Maintenance Conference (AMC) and your manager/supervisor pulls you into their office and asks, “Why do I need to pay to send you to the AMC when we have people attending Airbus’ and Boeing’s operator meetings?” Were you prepared to answer the question? Did the AMC Steering Group provide you with the facts needed to spar with your manager? With the 2017 AMC behind us and the first Mechanical Maintenance Conference (MMC) coming this fall, this PlaneTalk article provides you with the talking points and information on the benefits of attending MMC and next year’s AMC that you may need to get your travel approval from your management team.

The inaugural MMC is planned by ARINC IA and the AMC Steering Group. The MMC will generate its own Steering Group in 2018.

Manager: Why should we spend money sending people to the MMC or next year’s AMC when we support our airframers’ operator meetings? My response: While the airframers’ meetings are important and do address reliability and service issues important to our operations, it is the airframer’s meeting. As the AMC Chairperson, Marijan Jozic, often says in his opening remarks at the AMC, “...this is your conference.” This is an important distinction. The airframer’s meeting covers the topics the airframer thinks is most important based on the data they receive from operators. Their top 10 reliability issues may not match your top 10 reliability issues.

At the AMC or MMC, you are in control of what items will be discussed, what the questions are, and open the door for vendors to respond. In many cases, OEMs and airlines come together in a “blue sky” treatment of the problem. The airframers’ meetings are more judicious on the framing of agenda items due to contractual relationships with OEMs and operators, so it is not the same open forum. One of the intents of the airframer’s meeting is to show airlines a specific solution to a specific problem; there is no room for discussing alternate solutions. An airframer’s reliability meeting may cover twenty ATA-specific topics in the course of a meeting. On average, the AMC will cover over 200 items covering multiple ATAs (Auto Flight, Navigation, Communications, Lighting, Power Generation, In-Flight Entertainment, etc.), as well as maintenance philosophy and practices, and shop test stations. For the same ATA Chapters, the MMC will cover items not covered at the AMC.

Furthermore, during the course of the AMC, vendors attend to show off their latest products, which allows operators another avenue for addressing current issues. The best way to state this is: The airframer and OEM’s meetings deal with the past and present. The AMC and MMC deal with the past, present, and future, and provides the best value for your money.

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Manager: Doesn't the airframer's meeting cover most of our issues? My response: No. For instance, the airframer does not recognize equipment installed per an STC. One of your top ten items may be related to a part installed via an STC. An airframer's all-operators meeting won't address it, but the AMC/MMC will. At the AMC/MMC conferences, you and other operators that use the same STC can share ideas and opportunities with the STC holder or the manufacturer of the STC'd part to develop solutions that will resolve the issue. At an airframer's all-operators meeting, rarely, if ever, will there be a discussion of maintenance philosophy. The airframer or OEM has spent a lot of time and resources on developing what they believe is the best methodology for providing continued airworthiness of a part and are reluctant to change their methodology. This particular methodology may not mesh well with the way an airline operates the equipment.

The AMC and MMC provide a forum to discuss alternate ways of addressing methodology issues. Furthermore, at the airframer's meeting, operators don't get to hear how the airframer's or OEM's competition handles similar issues. At past AMCs, Boeing and Airbus have jointly supported operators with a problem with an OEM part or with addressing a maintenance philosophy issue. In some cases, an OEM has changed their philosophy based on the success of their competitors. Being able to discuss and implement alternate methodologies has helped airlines improve reliability and save money. The AMC and MMC provide opportunities for a win/win scenario for airlines, OEMs, and airframers. This is an advantage of the AMC/MMC that is rarely offered in other forums.

Airframe manufacturers' operators users group meeting only discuss Part 25 TC items. The MMC will discuss STC items as well.



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Manager: You almost have me convinced. What are some of the other benefits to attending the AMC and MMC? My response: Where do I begin? The AMC is a four-day (up to 16 hours a day) conference where you have the ability to meet with your peers to discuss issues of importance at a neutral site. At the 2017 AMC, there were over 23 different airlines, 4 major airframe vendors, and over 160 OEMs who participated at the AMC to share ideas to improve the reliability of avionics, improve maintenance on avionics components, and find better ways of addressing key issues in our industry. There are multiple opportunities for airline cost savings through the collaboration that occurs at the AMC. This is one of the top reasons for the establishment of the AMC and the MMC.

This will be the first year for the MMC conference. It will be a two-day event with many of the same participants from the AMC, but new OEMs as well. The MMC will have further opportunities to save money, because mechanical systems have known methods of failing and other airlines may have best practices for keeping these mechanical systems on wing longer. We believe the MMC will grow similarly in size to the AMC in the next few years with airlines' participation.

The last word. There are many venues operators can attend to address aircraft component in-service issues. One can successfully argue the benefits and viability of any of them. The AMC, and now the MMC, combines the benefits of all of the different venues because it brings major and minor airframe manufacturers, LRU OEMs, and airline operators together in one place where airlines can openly air and discuss issues and best practices and OEMs can provide viable solutions and alternatives.

The most compelling reason the AMC and MMC are the best venues for solving problems is that throughout the day's sessions and in the suites at night, engineers, reliability experts, and AMTs continue to get together to discuss and shape the future of maintenance in our industry.

Hopefully, this article has provided you with the talking points that you may need to justify going to the first MMC and why it is important to attend. If you need help, your AMC Steering Group stands by ready to assist with the information you need to sway your boss. We look forward to seeing everyone in Cleveland in November for the 1st MMC.

Networking is a word used too often. But at the AMC and MMC, its what returns the greatest value.