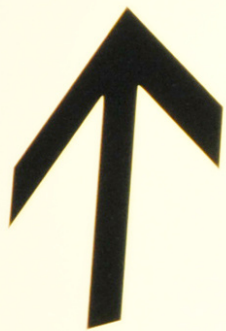


PREPARING FOR THE POST-COVID-19 PILOT JOB MARKET



Jobs

**THE POST-COVID-19 PILOT JOB MARKET:
HOW DOES THE FUTURE JOB MARKET LOOK LIKE AND
WHERE IS MY PLACE IN IT?**



ECA

European Cockpit Association

While there are a lot of unknowns on how recovery of the air transport industry will take place or when exactly it could happen, there is an indication that pilot jobs may be scarce. This guide will give you some essential tips how to prepare yourself for a highly competitive job market.

As we are waiting for the COVID-19 crisis to pass, it is natural to feel worried and frustrated. Some pilots have just been hired by an airline and fear they will be the first out. Others have been in-between jobs [when the crisis hit and landed in a holding pool](#). Students will be graduating soon into a market that announced a hiring freeze. [Atypically employed crews](#) received nothing more than an email that their contract is terminated. It may be difficult to think of the pilot job market with positivity. But an optimistic, yet realistic view, is probably required for all of us to remain:

1) MENTALLY FIT

When the market opens up and hiring begins again, you will need to be fit and ready to go. This means not only physically but mentally fit.

To remain mentally healthy is much more difficult than just exercising or eating well. Each of us has individual issues, families, relationships or even finances to worry about. All structures and routines from the 'pre-COVID' lives have fallen apart. You will have to maintain your mental well-being whether you are a young pilot with huge debt, or a family with a new house and no income, or a 55-year-old who cannot afford to retire but knows they are unlikely to fly again. It is clear that [COVID-19 has put a lot of pressure on the mental health of individuals](#). If you have access to a peer support program or group in your airline, you may want to use it to help you cope with potential problems. [see [EPPSI.EU](#)] If such a program doesn't exist, try talking to your colleagues or seek professional help.



Keep your mind active with new challenges. Talk to your office of unemployment and research possible educational programmes, check out the many free online courses available now or follow aviation-industry webinars. Fancy writing? Freelance writers with knowledge about aviation are in short supply. There are many webinars, which will help you better understand the developments in the market and help you make an informed decision about your next move depending on how airlines handled the crisis, how viable they are financially and how [they treated their employees](#).

You may not be able to be picky about an employer in the future, but it will give you an idea of what to expect from management when things get messy. These activities will not only keep you occupied but will also help you come up with a plan B.

Returning to flying commercially may still be a long way in the future. Plus, showing that you stayed focused, improved your non-technical skills and remained resilient during the crisis will make a positive impression on your future employer.



Following 2 bankruptcies and one redundancy, I have come to the point where I am retraining as a quality manager.

My office for unemployment has supported me in this with courses and other benefits. Most of the courses are online during this crisis, so the studying continues.

My dream is still to go back flying, anywhere in the world, but a plan B allows me to have more self confidence in the interviews."



2) PHYSICALLY FIT

The physically fit part is probably the easiest one. Eat healthy, exercise to the extent it is possible and get fresh air. Sufficient sleep is and remains a top priority, especially now when you don't have the hectic pilot rosters. Use this as an opportunity to build better sleep habits.

External links: [7 days to get fit without a gym](#), [25 at home workouts](#)



3) AVIATION FIT

If you are furloughed or lost your job, make sure you have all documentation in order.

Reports/letters concerning:

- » No accident/incidents
- » Flight Time verifications
- » Letters of recommendations
- » Last sim checks
- » All other training documentations (i.e. ditching, safety and equipment, etc.)

If your company gets in financial trouble, it may become more difficult to collect all this down the line.

Even if you are not flying, review the aircraft systems, memory items and procedures for your current aircraft. If you are on furlough, then download the OM A and other documents as well. Download them timely as websites may close for a period of time.

Make sure your logbook and certificates are up to date. Talk to the local unemployment office about help renewing your medicals and licenses. Keep in mind

that many European governments have relaxed rules, funded new programmes and have measures to help workers amid the COVID-19 crisis. Your union will also be able to give you accurate advice or tips on what the available state tools are to relieve some of the financial pressure. Which brings us to the hardest part:

4) FINANCIALLY FIT

None of us will want to admit that we could have handled our finances better. Or if you are at the beginning of your career, naturally, your financial situation may be very precarious.

Who do you owe debt to? Being proactive early is the key. Contact them and discuss the possibilities. There are already many programs in place to help with the situation and more being created weekly. House mortgages, rent, health insurance, student debt – some of these you may be able to defer even if that would bring more costs in the future. Still, it would be better than dealing with personal bankruptcy. Be aware that in many countries declaring bankruptcy could be considered a security risk and you could lose your license.

Summary

We are not alone in this crisis and we should be careful not to isolate ourselves. Talk to your fellow pilots and family. Assess your personal situation and try to stay positive and work on a future in aviation. Develop a viable plan B.

We have heard that the more optimistic companies and brokers are building pools of potential candidates for the post corona period. Interviews performed online should be done with the same thorough preparation that you would do if the interview was in person. The appendixes are attached to help you prepare.

Talk, share and be patient, but ask for help and information. Think outside of the box. Stay safe!

Appendix 1

A JOB INTERVIEW DURING THE CORONA CRISIS

Due to travel restriction and lockdowns, all job interviews that are currently happening can only assess your documents, your knowledge and your soft skills. The old days where many airlines were primarily interested in your hard skills only, i.e. simulator, are over. Whether they will return or not is unknown.

Having an online interview raises its own complications and challenges. Data mine the company using the suggestions in appendix 2.

The purpose of the online interview is that they can see you, otherwise a telephone interview would be adequate. There are many good guides online to help but a few basics:

- » Setup and test your **hardware** well in advance
- » Download the **app**, if one is available
- » Make sure the **background** is uncluttered
- » Test the **lighting**, they will want to see you
- » Reboot your **computer** shortly before beginning the interview. You may have issues with bandwidth especially during the corona crisis, a rebooted computer helps.
- » Try to dial in via **landline**, mobile data connects are usually less stable
- » Test how to turn **on and off** your microphone and camera, test the sound and video quality. A **headset** almost always delivers better audio quality than a built-in microphone
- » Lock the **door** during the interview, having children run through, pets demanding your attention or your spouse talking to you is distracting. If for some reason you do not have someone to help with the children, warn the interviewer in advance.
- » Dress nice and, yes, make sure you are **fully dressed**.
- » Talk slowly and be prepared for **audio disturbances** requiring you to repeat answers
- » **Practice, practice, practice**

Appendix 2

DATA MINING AND PREPARING

Congratulations, you have an interview date and need to prepare.

Use the internet to find out and learn information about the company: Number of aircraft bases, headquarters, what type of operations are flown, history and future plans. Try to find out unique information, if possible. Some companies have a set of corporate golden rules or principles, which they are proud of. If the company has a set of golden rules and you do not know them, you will not progress. One example of such values is easyJet's "Orange Spirit". Make sure you have the up to date ones as they do change. If you search the internet for the names of the companies where you are applying adding the following key words: Values, golden rules, principles, strategy.

You will usually find a lot of good information.

Data mine yourself. Do you have any social media posts which you wish were not there? These could include internal/private chatrooms, Facebook, LinkedIn, PPRUNE, etc. If your previous airline has gone bankrupt, we know of cases where Human Resource files were illegally passed on to assessment centers. If you have sent any letters of complaint or received letters of reprimand, prepare answers in case they come up during the interviews.

It is common to be asked to present your CV, evaluate yourself (strengths and weaknesses) and – in some cases – you might be asked to prepare answers to questions. Prepare a couple of questions (not about pay though!) for the interviewers as well as you might be asked whether you have questions. In case you don't, some may think you are not interested enough in the job or company.

Preparing

Prepare a verbal presentation about your motivation to work for this company. An answer such as "Well, I fly A320s and I need a job", is not what a recruiter wants to hear. Do not complain about or talk badly of your current or prior employers, you do not know who knows whom. Here, diplomatic honesty is the key. It may sound obvious but – research and learn about the company – structure, leadership, history, values.

Review your CV, try to give original personal answers. This also applies when you present your strengths and weaknesses. You might want to tell a short story, which highlights your strengths. When you talk about weaknesses, also mention what you are doing to improve. It is often hard to evaluate your own personality, ask colleagues, look for personality tests on the internet or buy a book. Look online and find a book with good reviews under the title of "Assessment Center for Managers." Read the whole book and do the practice tests, be honest with yourself and you will be well prepared.

A psychologist may be taking part in the interview. It is common that you first must complete an online test prior to the online interview. You can find online tests to help prepare but the most important thing is to be consistent. They are trying to determine whether you will fit into the company's profile. Within Europe we have very different types of ways of dealing with hierarchy in the crew, CRM, etc. The psychologist's job is to try and assess your fit with their particular ways. Be yourself, do not try to create a false personality, it will not work.

Practicing

You will need someone to help by playing the role of interviewer. The ideal scenario is to find someone who has either been through a number of interviews themselves or conducted interviews. Otherwise find someone who can be critical and honest with you. If you cannot find someone, film the practice interview using the computer's camera for you to review.

If you can find someone to help, prepare a list of questions for them. The list should include:

- a. Company information
- b. A CV review
- c. Personality traits (positive and negative)
- d. Embarrassing picture (if you have any), or even borderline pictures.
- e. Situations that you have experienced, both where you are proud and not so proud of.
- f. Do you have any questions.

When doing a practice run, do not stop and start over. You will make mistakes, also on that day, what is expected and important is the recovery.

One reason to film the practices sessions is that the interviewee often has possible annoying habits which they are not aware of, i.e. tapping a ring on the table, tapping a pencil. These are easiest seen on film.

The second big advantage of filming the practice sessions is time. You should know roughly how long the process will take, so try to give short accurate answers (yes and no are generally not allowed). Time management is a big issue.

At the end you will almost certainly be asked what questions you have. Questions about salary and such are not the best. The old favorite is to ask what the further process will be, both in time and content. You might ask which bases the airline is hiring for. You could also ask a personal question to the assessor, i.e. how long have you been with airline 'X' or what is their favorite thing about the airline. You should also ask for business cards/ contact details from all the people present. Asking for a contact person in case any further questions or issues arise is an excellent way to end.

The more original, creative and honest answers you can give, the more you will stand out.

Appendix 3

THE CORONA CRISIS IS OVER; THE INDUSTRY HAS BOUNCED BACK AND IS STRONGER THAN EVER

This is a very optimistic view, but it is being prophesized by some companies

Pick out 2-4 airlines where you want to work, it is better to pick a few and be well prepared than approach many without proper preparation. Find out their requirements and what the application process is, most adverts are online and will tell you what data you will need to put into the online application part. Try to find out how long the airline needs to process the data, in other words, when can you expect an answer and hopefully an interview. Here, networking through friends, chat rooms and colleagues is key. Collect the data and prepare your CV.

In addition to the information in the previous appendixes, an interview in person has additional pitfalls:

The receptionist might be part of the interviewing team. Arrive at the location about 10-15 minutes early, plan flights and hotels with a buffer. Be nice and answer politely

questions and comments from everyone you meet. Unfortunately, many airlines require you to get to the assessment center on your own costs. Plan early, as we all know flights, train tickets and hotels get very expensive at the last minute. If you have a morning interview or the destination is a bit difficult and you can afford it, go the night before. Even if there are numerous flights per day, give plenty of time for factoring delays. Do not take the last flight.

When you walk into the room, shake everyone's hand, or during these pandemic times enquire about the guidelines in place for greetings, etc. Look them in the eye. If handshakes are welcome, no limp and no crushing handshakes.

Sit comfortably but no slouching. Now just do what you practiced. If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification. At the end, remember the business cards and a contact person.

A few days after the interview send each person a short email, thanking them for their time and that you appreciated the chance to be able to present yourself to the airline.

Wait until the expected timeline discussed during the interview has passed, adding in a few days, then get in touch with your contact person. This person is probably very stressed, so keep it short and politely ask if there is any news, and if not, when should you try to contact them again.

Appendix 4

YOU PASSED THE INTERVIEW, CONGRATULATIONS!

Get a copy of the contract as soon as possible and have it reviewed. Most Pilot Associations and unions offer this type of legal advice for their members. If you are not a member or your association does not offer this support, it is worth contacting a legal advisor. Many contracts nowadays come with "small print" clauses on tax and other legal issues. You may still take the job, but at least you'll know what you're signing up for.

Find out as quickly as possible what documentation is needed. Police reports and other security documents can take weeks to obtain and are often valid only for a short period of time.

Start studying, even if it is the same aircraft type which you have flown for 10 years. You will be amazed at how much you have forgotten. Try to get access to OM-A & B, study as much as possible. Find out when and where the training will take place, and very importantly, who pays. This should be in the contract and information package, but is often missing.

Appendix 5

YOU DID NOT PASS...

Extremely frustrating but keep trying. Email the interviewers/ person of contact and seek feedback. Some are happy to give an honest one that you may find helpful for your job quest.

The market has its ups and downs and we are in a historical down. Regularly, check all your documents and make sure that your type-rating, medical, security check (if applicable) are all valid. Talk to your unemployment office early and see if they are willing to help with the cost of keeping your license and medical valid.



About ECA

The European Cockpit Association represents the collective interests of professional pilots at European level, striving for the highest levels of aviation safety and fostering social rights and quality employment.

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