

RATING YOUR AVIATION TEAM: DO THEY TRULY DESERVE FIVE STARS?

How often do you check reviews for a product you are considering for purchase? Is a three-star rating good enough? The last time you looked for a doctor, did you check their ratings on www.healthgrades.com or www.ratemds.com? Are you willing to go to a “two-star” doctor? Many of us never question the quality of the doctor we have been using for years until we need to find somebody else. If we examine the reasons for the confidence in our physician, we often find that it is based on behaviors or facts that are unrelated to the doctor’s ability to deliver low-risk healthcare. Were the magazines current in the lobby? Did I have to wait long in the exam room? Was the doctor professionally dressed when they greeted me? Does the website have online scheduling? Occasionally, we may grab a stealthy glance at a diploma on the wall before a nurse or doctor appears in the exam room. Is “graduate” good enough? Is “legal” good enough?

We regularly observe the same dynamic with individuals who use on-demand aviation transportation. An executive or individual, often for years, assumes the aviation team they trust (internal or external) is “the best” because of behaviors or facts unrelated to the aviation team’s true competence.

“The pilot’s last landing was amazing.”
“They always have my newspapers.”
“The aircraft is stocked with my favorite coffee.”
“The management company that operates my aircraft operates many aircraft.”



How can an aviation user know if the aviation team that provides their transportation is healthy? Is there a www.ismyaviationteamcrazy.com website that provides reviews? We would suggest there is one critical behavior that indicates the health of your aviation team...they don’t point to themselves as the only source of expertise. Would you consider investing in a company that did not have audited financials?

Healthy aviation organizations use a discipline of external perspective. This may be a disciplined review with a pre-identified peer group, the use of an external audit standard, or a specialized review by a third-party expert. The approach that is appropriate for each aviation user is highly dependent on their individual risk requirements. Highly risk-adverse users may desire a formal audit discipline to multiple accepted external standards that exceeds legal requirements. Some aviation users may be satisfied with “legal” as good enough. Regardless which risk standard you desire, how do you know if an external review is a regular discipline of the organizations that provide your aviation transportation?

We often find that our clients struggle with identifying the standards that best align with their needs. Unfortunately, something as simple as General Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) does not exist in the aviation world. There are many legal options as well as industry-defined standards to consider:

Legal Options and Industry Standards (continued):

Legal	Industry
FAR Part 91: Non-commercial operations	IS-BAO: International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations. Similar to ISO standards.
FAR Part 91K: Fractional aircraft	BARS: Basic Aviation Risk Standard
FAR Part 121: Scheduled Air Carrier	BASC: Business Aviation Safety Consortium
FAR Part 125: Large aircraft non-commercial operations	ACSF: Air Charter Safety Foundation
FAR Part 135: On-demand commercial operations	IS-BAH: National Air Transportation Association International Standard for Business Aircraft Handling
EASA: European Commercial Standards	

In addition to these industry standards there are several for-profit firms that offer their own standards or reviews such as Wyvern, ARGUS, and VanAllen.

Identifying the correct external standard starts with the identification of the aviation user’s expectations. Each of the aviation external standards have biases and do not provide an easy solution for every user. An aircraft owner that expects his aviation team to operate with the discipline of a major air carrier (Delta, American, United, etc.) may only be required by law to operate under FAR Part 91, but the expectations demand at least FAR Part 121 standards. The corporate or individual culture may also align with BARS versus IS-BAO.

We find this step of identifying the user’s expectations often missing in the relationship between the user and the aviation team. Once these expectations are identified, you can apply the correct external standard and define the cycle of periodic review. Coaching the aviation provider or internal team is critical, as they usually have a compliance approach. They focus on being “legal” and miss the alignment with their user’s expectations.

Consider these actions:

- If you are a user of on demand transportation: Have I thought about my expectations and have I communicated it to my aviation provider or aviation team?
-
- If you are a provider of aviation services to multiple users: Do I understand each of my client’s different expectations and am I customizing my external review for each client?
-
- If you are a trusted adviser to an aviation user: Does the provider of aviation services to my client understand what is appropriate for my client?
-
- If you are leading an aviation team that serves a single user or entity: Do I really understand my user’s expectations and am I providing proactive transparency to illustrate our alignment?

Imagine the peace of mind knowing when you or your clients use on-demand aviation transportation that your team deserves a five-star rating for all the right reasons.