Information Technology Holds Key To Airline Productivity

Information technology is the key to boosting productivity in the air transport industry, according to a top Boeing Company official.

Richard G. Higgins, vice president-Maintenance Engineering & Publications for Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group, said today that "information technology has fundamentally changed the way airplanes are designed and built," and that Boeing is now applying that technology "to change the way airplanes are maintained as well."

In an address to aviation officials attending the European Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul Conference in Shannon, Ireland, Higgins said information technology saves time and money in the maintenance of aircraft and also enhances safety.

He noted that a new family of information tools, under the trade name Boeing Digital, has helped airlines make significant improvements in maintenance processes. These tools replace paper and microfilmed maintenance documents with digitized versions that are on compact disks or accessible online. Information can be retrieved much faster from these digital sources, speeding up aircraft troubleshooting.

Another key advantage of digitally based information tools, said Higgins, is that they can be updated quickly, enabling maintenance staffs to work with the most current and accurate information.

He cited Boeing On-Line Delivery (BOLD) as one of the most significant information tools in the Boeing Digital family. Through high-speed network connections, the world's largest airlines access BOLD to quickly retrieve service bulletins, component maintenance manuals and airplane technical drawings directly from a Boeing database.

To further improve access, Higgins announced that Boeing will begin a trial program to make BOLD available via the Internet later this month. He added that by the end of next year, Boeing expects to make BOLD a completely web-based service.

Ultimately, said Higgins, BOLD will evolve into a single point of contact through which airlines will obtain all of the technical information they need to maintain and operate their Boeing fleets.

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