

Let me introduce a new feature which we hope will in future make a regular appearance in Hindsight! We know there are a lot of people out there who are rightly proud of helping to create innovations in working practices which might be interesting to others. Our first interviewee is one such person.

But there are many other people out there with experience of interesting ways of working which they may or may not have invented. And many more who have found out things that work really well. It is particularly such frontline people that we'd like to find for future editions, but we'll also be keen on interviewing anybody else with an interesting perspective that may help link 'service delivery' with 'safety'.

All you have to do is offer yourself for interview to the Editor and if you're chosen, we'll do the rest. And if you're shy, don't be put off by interviews that appear alongside a photograph - we won't insist on one!



Four-to-one

An interview with Training Manager **Nina Lindén**, Stockholm-Arlanda Tower

"I am not saying we are excellent in teaching, but in fact we are";

Nina Lindén laughs, one of those bubbling generous laughs a nice down to earth person can deliver.

Following eleven years as a tower controller, she took up the challenge of Training Manager for Stockholm-Arlanda Tower in 2004.

HOW HAS TRAINING CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

"A lot, today we always treat the student as a colleague from day one", she explains. "In addition the introduction of an on-site 270 degree tower simulator has of course improved transition training. Today, normally the first three weeks is classroom training mixed with simulator exercises, e.g. basic traffic combined with using the electronic strips; it gives the students a good introduction to the real work".

WHEN THE STUDENTS ARRIVE, WHAT ARE YOUR ROUTINES?

"Before the transition training, we prepare the arrival of the students carefully. Four instructors per student are selected; three air traffic controllers plus one assistant controller. These instructors are carefully chosen from controllers and assistant controllers applying for and passing the instructors' training programme.

Following the arrival of the student, we arrange an introduction/familiarisation day. In a relaxed way the instructors

present themselves, it is important for everybody to get to know each other well. Of course we also talk through the training schedule, presenting the "game plan". We have developed a document that clearly describes what is expected from the students, it is a detailed description of the step-wise approach we use. The document includes everything from analysis and planning to coordination, behaviour and attitude. It is done in a relaxed way though; it is extremely important that the students feel welcome and part of the working environment".

FOUR INSTRUCTORS PER STUDENT, DOES THAT REALLY WORK?

"Using four instructors works extremely well", explains Nina. "We always stress that all operational personnel should work in a similar way, adhering to the procedures and showing respect to each other; above all, we stress that everybody is responsible for safety. By using several instructors the student can clearly see that this is not just empty words. In addition, it is better to not be dependent on one instructor, by using several we secure an uninterrupted training period".

HOW DO YOU FOLLOW THE PROGRESS OF THE LEARNING CURVE?

"Following each planned development period (step), we start with an instructors' meeting. Prior to this meeting the instructors individually, plus the student, deliver a summary of the progress so far. We use questions such as: What is excellent? What needs to be improved? Both the instructors and the student use the same feedback document. Also personal opinions are allowed, the more we speak plain language the better. We can compare the instructors' opinions with that of the student, and ask are they seeing the same picture? Discussing all these aspects with four instructors gives a higher quality. We

actually only see advantages by using multiple instructors", explains Nina.

"Finally a decision is made whether the student is ready to move on to the next training level or not.

Minutes from this meeting are mandatory. The minutes include observations from the on-the-job training reports; examples of specific training points (good or not so good) are added if needed. We then produce a draft action plan where all the observations are included".



AND THEN?

"As soon as possible we meet the student; without feedback it is difficult to improve. We describe the instructors' observations, not individually but as a group observation. We ask the student to produce his/her action plan based on our observations, to see how we can improve together. Finally we agree to one action plan to follow in the next phase of the training".

DO YOU EVER HAVE PROBLEMS?

"Sometimes a student has extremely good results; sometimes it may take longer to achieve acceptable skills. Some students only need around 80 days of operational training, whereas others need 140 days. The standard is 100 days; 80 in the ATCO working positions, 15 as an assistant controller (e.g. clearance delivery) and 5 for others (e.g. supervisor). The most difficult situation is when the student and the instructors have differing views of the progress. If problems occur, we always offer the students time with an independent behavioural psychologist to talk things through; we

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have found that such sessions help to improve the learning curve dramatically even if it may not be accepted immediately. At the end of the day, though, the students are ready to accept the help.

WHAT ARE THE SUCCESS FACTORS?

Nina stresses that it is extremely important to be clear and straightforward in communication (like all Swedes; author's comment). "This is valid for communication with the students as well as internally between the instructors. Support the student, make her/him feel comfortable and welcome, but make it very clear what is expected. Without clear goals it is difficult to achieve good results. So far we have been quite successful. Using four instructors is here to stay"! 