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I am writing this foreword at the end of a rewarding but emotional week, both personally and professionally. Among many things, my youngest son turned five, I got my first shot of vaccine at work, and I had the privilege to co-moderate an amazing webinar by German psychologist Markus Flemming on mental flexibility for ATCOs, reflecting on handling changes in demand in a sporting context. This was a real revelation on how to refocus and learn from sports. I was initially going to write about how the new reality is, and will be, different. But based on what I heard from Markus, I would like to introduce a provocative thought: **the new normal is the old normal.**

Instinctively, you probably disagree with this. I assure you that we share a view that the new reality is likely to be different from old one. I have the privilege to have read some of the *HindSight* content already. In this edition are articles and interviews that show how the pandemic has dramatically changed the lives of many: people lost jobs and for those that didn't, new working patterns have affected teamwork and blurred the work-life balance.

But as many of us go back to our jobs – in the Ops room, in the cockpit or in the office – in many ways, things are much the same as before. So, what

is different for me? While the world has changed, as it always does, the fundamentals of work remain broadly the same. And I am the same person. Most things at work are more or less the same. But the expectations and feelings are different. Here we can learn from sport psychology. As Markus remarked, *"No-one makes you feel."* Consider how athletes get the right arousal – not too low or too high – for effective performance in competitions. Perhaps, as Markus suggested, we can ask ourselves *how we want to feel today*. And we can adjust our expectations and frame of mind based on evidence and what is more or less likely to happen. Can we use such insights to improve our performance after few weeks at home before our next shift or flight?

But we are likely to face surprises. So now for a second provocative thought: **surprises are the new normal and resilience is in big demand.** Volatile times bring disruptions, interruptions, and setbacks, even for the most successful among us. A lot of people discovered and talk about 'resilience'. At a personal level, this draws from our character, developed from our life experience and the set of core values and attitudes that have emerged, which motivate our efforts to overcome setbacks. Resilience also thrives on community. We are more motivated to pick ourselves up with the support from

others who want us – and our social groups – to thrive. Our community also creates a sort of obligation to others because we need each other. Resilience is manifested in goals that take attention away of the past and create excitement about the future, and actions that help us meet these goals. This has become clearer for many of us today in our personal and professional lives. This is why resilience is in big demand when surprises are the new normal.

In the context of these provocative thoughts, we need to think about how the work-life balance will look after the pandemic. As if being a working parent didn't already include enough moving pieces to manage, even our kids are now having teleconferences and our toddlers need their tablets to make it through the day. For my family, there are moments when I am working from home when we need five or more devices online to keep with our work from home and school from home. Many online conference calls are early in the morning or late at night to accommodate people from different continents. In this respect, I am somehow privileged. Since the tail of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have remained mostly at the work office, and I feel again that the new reality is the old reality.





WORD

But the crisis has pushed work and home lives under the same roof for many families and the struggle to manage it all is now visible to peers and bosses. Here we have two schools of thought: some love it and praise the staff that worked the extra mile from home, and some hate WFH and thinks the staff is on a perpetual holiday. Either way, I hope that one major shift will be a move away from the harmful assumption that a 24/7 work culture works well for anyone.


During this pandemic, employers are seeing that workers can't function well without accommodation for their family responsibilities. Will that lesson last after the crisis is over? Our families want greater choices in determining how their work and their families fit together. Post-pandemic, can we create a system that fits real workers, not just idealised ones? If so, we have the opportunity to emerge from this crisis with both healthier employees and better performing organisations.

Surprises and disruption will be the norm and we will need to adapt and be resilient. The people who will thrive after crisis are those who have accepted the reality, found meaning in these terrible times and use their "skill bricolage" to improvise with that we have. The experts advise that you may bounce back with one or two traits

above, but you will be resilient only of you possess all three.

For us in aviation, I tend to agree with Markus Flemming – in the aftermath of COVID19, crisis will rely on mental skills and resilience, not just our technical skills. I came across the following in an article by Diane Coutu, 'How Resilience Works' in the *Harvard Business Review*:

"Meaning can be elusive, and just because you found it once doesn't mean you'll keep it or find it again. Consider Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who survived the war against the Nazis, imprisonment in the gulag, and cancer. Yet when he moved to a farm in peaceful, safe Vermont, he could not cope with the "infantile West." He was unable to discern any real meaning in what he felt to be the destructive and irresponsible freedom of the West. Upset by his critics, he withdrew into his farmhouse, behind a locked fence, seldom to be seen in public. In 1994, a bitter man, Solzhenitsyn moved back to Russia."

This edition of *HindSight*, in my opinion, is a necessary read because it brings important insights and lessons learned from the pandemic in aviation and elsewhere. My personal thanks to all authors, contributors and to our Editor-in-Chief, Steven Shorrock. Enjoy the reading. 

WELCOME

Welcome to issue 32 of EUROCONTROL's *HindSight* magazine, the magazine on human and organisational factors in operations, in air traffic management and beyond.

This issue concerns 'the new reality' that we are facing. It includes a wide variety of articles from front-line staff and specialists in safety, human factors, psychology, aeromedical, and human and organisational performance in aviation. There are also insights from healthcare, shipping, rail, community development and psychotherapy. The articles reflect how many stakeholders have adjusted and adapted, and the implications of the new reality, for individuals, operational teams, support teams, management, organisations (including operators and service providers), regulators, and intergovernmental aviation organisations.

What is clear is that the pandemic has affected everyone. The importance of resilience for individuals, groups, organisations and whole sectors has become more apparent than ever, along with the need for mutual support to get through the crisis.

We hope that the articles trigger conversations among readers. Do your operational and non-operational colleagues know about *HindSight*? Would you be willing to ask them, and encourage them to subscribe? Search 'SKYbrary HindSight' for details.

The next issue of *HindSight* will be on the theme of 'digitalisation and human performance'. What are the implications of this for the work of you and your colleagues, and your organisation? Let us know, in a few words or more, for Issue 33 of *HindSight* magazine.