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DOM Notebook

## Building a Community of Leaders

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*Mike Gamauf*

*NBAA's Maintenance Management Conference provides the resources and the inspiration*

*By Mike Gamauf mgamauf@yahoo.com*

The NBAA Maintenance Management Conference (MMC) is business aviation's dedicated learning event for those responsible for managing the maintenance function of flight departments. This three-day conference provides valuable information for individuals interested in enhancing their knowledge of aircraft maintenance and management, along with ideas and suggestions for those interested in professional development or meeting career goals.

This year the event was held April 5-7 at the San Diego, Calif., Hilton Bayfront Hotel, with 400 attendees and 97 vendors, making the 26th annual gathering the largest to date. "This year's MMC was a resounding success, said Lee Brewster, president/executive director for Ft. Worth, Texas-based National Center for Aerospace & Transportation Technologies and this year's MMC co-chair. The conference's theme of 'Building a Community of Leaders' was evident in the quality of the presenters, attendees, and of course, our sponsors and vendors. We look forward to building on the momentum and enthusiasm with next year's conference in Nashville, see y'all there!" Brewster added.

The conference keynote address was provided by NBAA Maintenance Committee Chair Brad Townsend, who welcomed the attendees and challenged them to take a leadership role in promoting professionalism through example. Over the past two decades, the aviation industry has seen some tough times. Interest in pursuing aviation as a career is down due to the perceived decline in the airline industry. For most of the travelling public, the flight experience has all the joy of a cow on the way to meat packing plant. This perception trickles down to young people who set career goals based on their and their parents' perceptions. Enrollment in A&P schools is down and many graduates find work in other technical fields. It is getting harder and harder to find good technicians who want to pursue aviation maintenance as a profession. For those of us who know better, aviation is still an exciting and rewarding career, and it is our duty to help the next generation see that they can pursue their interest in flight and build a successful career. This year's event provided the guidance on how managers and senior technicians can learn to be strong leaders by example and help encourage others who are beginning their careers.

Show Review

Building on the theme of leadership by example, this year's MMC was filled with useful seminars. Kicking off the conference was Giacinta Bradley Koontz, aviation historian and author, who provided the audience with a history lesson about influential mechanics who paved the way for many historical aviation firsts. While many have heard of Charles Taylor, the Wright Brothers' mechanic, Bradley provided insight into several historic figures like Frederick Rentschler, who founded **Pratt & Whitney**, and Burt Kinner, inventor of Kinner Engines and airplanes. She told stories of how they turned their mechanical aptitude into successful businesses. She also provided stories about Mary Solbrig, the "Engine Whisperer" who could tune aircraft engines just by sound, and Cornelius Coffey, an African American who earned both a commercial pilots license and mechanic license, and started a racially integrated aviation school in Chicago in 1937. Her presentation set a tone of respect for those leaders in the aviation's past so that we may learn from their inventiveness and keep the torch burning. (Learn more about pioneering mechanics other works by Bradley Koontz and at her website [www.harrietquimby.org](http://www.harrietquimby.org))

One return speaker, who always has a captivating presentation, is Dr. Tony Kern, CEO and senior partner of Colorado Springs, Colo.-based Convergent Performance, LLC, a company specializing in helping corporations and individuals reach their performance goals ([www.convergentperformance.com](http://www.convergentperformance.com)). Dr. Kern's "Waging a Global War on Error in Aviation Maintenance Operations" presentation shows managers how to instill a culture of compliance and diligence which prevents errors. Guy Minor, from the **FAA** Safety Team, presented examples of non-compliance that lead to both accidents and civil penalties. In addition to law suits, there is a growing trend to seek criminal penalties for even the most minimal infractions, so knowing and following the rules is essential for both safety and keeping out of hot water.

One of the more eye opening speakers was Greg Ripple, an aviation and labor law attorney from Miller Johnson Law Firm of Grand Rapids, Mich., who spoke about the legal implications of hiring contractors to supplement your work force. It turns out that the rules and tax implications for this type of labor are both byzantine and potentially expensive. Essentially if you hire someone, and control what and how they do work, and they cannot lose money on the job, they are probably employees and not contractors.

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**Gain critical knowledge on maintenance obligations prior to leasing an aircraft and what you need to know in order to avoid costly penalties or expensive last minute maintenance prior to lease return!**

Panel members Jim Janaitis, IBM Flight Operations; Jim Sparks, Richardson Aviation; Charlie Harvich, FlightSafety International; and Rudy Toering and Terry Martin from Honeywell-CAE Training Alliance, discussed new directions and importance for technician training. As aircraft become more advanced, the need for training becomes more important, and computer based training becomes essential. The ability to simulate a fault on the computer will speed troubleshooting time and improve technicians ability to rapidly and cost effectively fix problems, as opposed to the old method of replacing components.

David Wyndham from Conklin & de Decker, presented tips on maximizing aircraft value, and also provided managers with a logical method for determining when and how to replace an aircraft. Presented by Debra Bew Liu, Aircraft Acquisitions, Inc., and John Bucher, Aircraft Maintenance Consultant, the two portrayed a typical buyer/seller relationship in simulated used aircraft sales arrangement. It demonstrated the complexities and pitfalls of preparation, execution and delivery of a pre-purchase evaluation. While the duo presented an accurate and sometimes heated representation of both parties, it did drive home the need for preparation and ownership of the process.

For the many wrench heads in the crowd, Joe Schwan from Snap-on Tools, Corp., presented some high tech examples of IS-BAO compliant tool control technologies, with a spotlight on Snap-on's new Automated Tool Control device. The computer assisted tool box uses optical scanning method on top of a high contrast shadow box tool storage cabinet to accurately track and monitor tool use. When a tool is removed the optical sensor tracks the removal and displays it on a monitor. The system is so sensitive, it can track drive tips for correct status.

(Note: All of The presentations from the show are available at NBAA's website, and can be accessed at: [www.nbaa.org/member/events/mmc/2011/presentations/](http://www.nbaa.org/member/events/mmc/2011/presentations/))

Although not part of the MMC, but keeping with the spirit of building leaders, a summit was held to among leading aviation maintenance advocacy groups — AMTSociety, National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA) Maintenance Committee and the Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA). The focus of the meeting was to coordinate efforts to enhance and grow the aviation maintenance professional. All parties agreed to hold regular meetings to move forward in a positive and proactive manner, to show a united front to address issues pertinent to our industry.

#### More than a Scholarship

Of the many highlights at this year's meeting was the chance for participants to support the NBAA Maintenance Committee's Technical Reward and Career Scholarships (TRACS) program. These scholarships are designed to help jump start the career for technicians are either completing their A&P training or are aspiring to advance their career in business aviation. Earning an A&P license is the just the key to unlock the door toward a building a career as a professional aircraft maintenance technician, but further training and experience are necessary to advance beyond entry level. This year a record 34 scholarships were awarded.

In addition to the scholarships, the NBAA TRACS Scholarship Committee helps raise money to cover travel expenses and allow technicians to receive this valuable training. This year there was a silent auction for donated items such as tools, aircraft models, GPS, NASCAR souvenirs, and an iPad. The silent auction raised about \$6,000. There was also a beautiful, custom designed tool box donated by Snap-on Industrial that was put up for raffle, and the box alone raised over \$8,200 dollars. "Snap-on Industrial was pleased to donate a custom-built roll cab tool box in support of the National Business Aviation Association's TRACS Scholarship fund," said Scott Steward, segment support manager, aerospace/aviation division, Snap-on Industrial. "For years technicians from the aerospace and aviation industries have relied on Snap-on Industrial tools and equipment to get the job, and we're happy to continue supporting these industries through efforts such as the TRACS Scholarship program," Steward added.

As constantly evolving technology affects every aspect of aviation, it is easy to feel inundated. The MMC is your best bet to stay current with what is happening in the industry as well as with your peers. Staying connected is a great way to thrive while your busy schedule tries to pull you under.

This year's event focused on leadership, and how to give back to our industry by helping others. By helping show others the way to a successful career, you not only serve our industry, but you help yourself by demonstrating your professionalism and leadership abilities. Especially true in aviation, you always have something to learn and share, and if you can only make one event, the MMC is the one you should attend. BCA



**The Snap-on Tools Automated Tool Control device was demonstrated at the MMC. Credit: SNAP-ON INDUSTRIAL**

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