

HIRE PRINCIPLES

Around half a million new pilots will be needed over the next ten years as the airline industry expands around the world. Where are the main opportunities for those with their eye on a new career?

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EUROPE

Low-cost leads way

No-frills carriers are among the biggest recruiters in the region, although full-service Virgin and BA are also seeking new talent

KEN WALKER LONDON

When it comes to airline pilot recruitment, “we’ve got a perfect storm brewing”, reckons Anthony Petteford, chief commercial officer of CTC Aviation – one of the largest European trainers of future flightdeck occupants.

An estimated 500,000 new pilots will be needed over the coming decade, he says, due to the requirement to replace 150,000 current personnel reaching retirement age, and to find a further 350,000 to cope with the industry’s global expansion.

These huge numbers are looming at a time when factors are conspiring to reduce the volume of new entrants to the industry.

“Since 9/11, the moment of epiphany where young people are inspired has been denied to them by not being allowed on to flight-decks. That’s reduced the number of aspiring pilots. The increase in costs to qualify as a pilot has also constrained the ability to enter the profession,” he says.

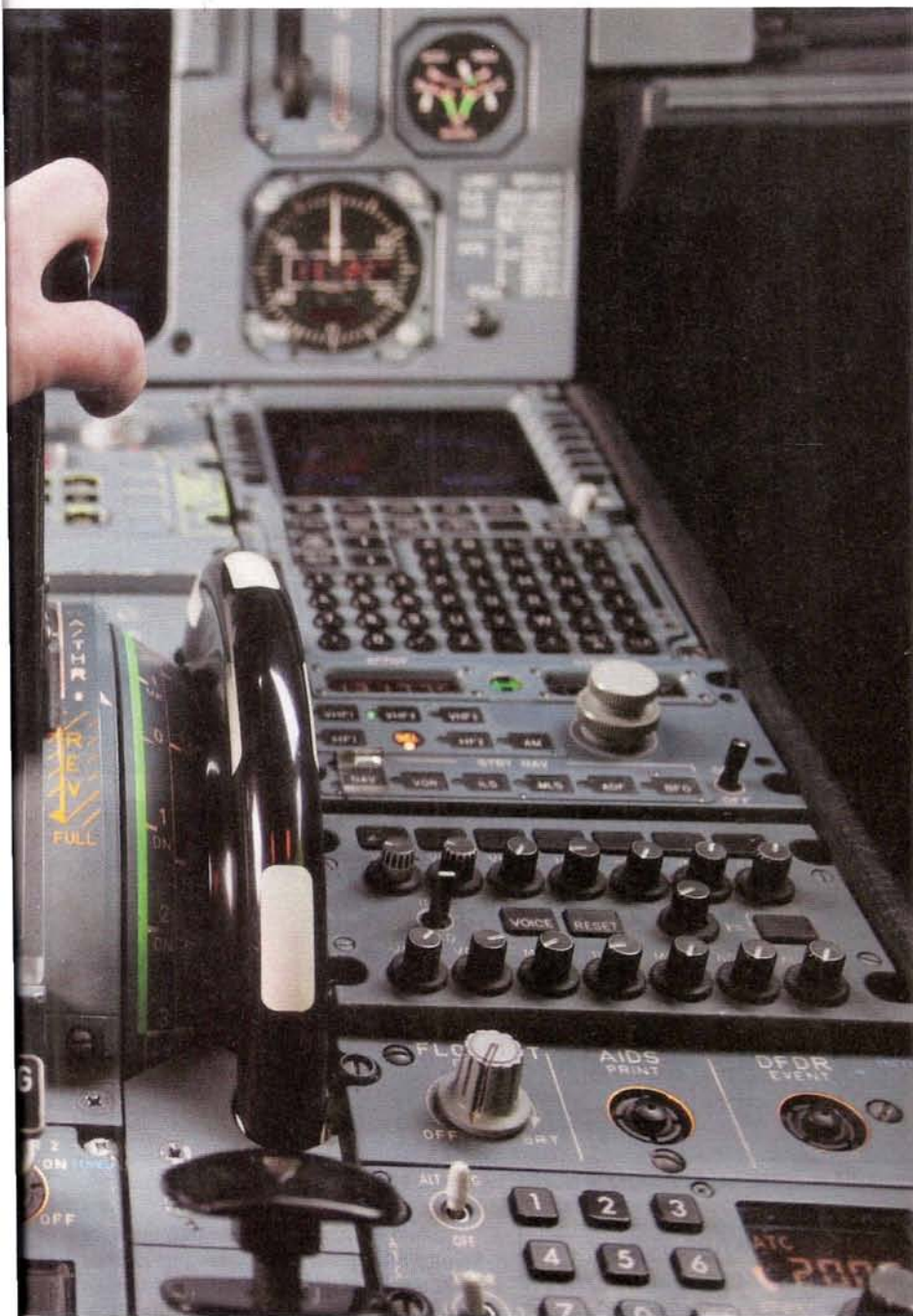
Additionally, the increasing automation of aircraft is, in the eyes of potential young recruits, downgrading the status and desirability of life behind the control yoke or beside the sidestick. The lack of time spent actually flying many modern airliners is reducing the status of pilots to that of an operative, not a professional, many believe.

“They gain the impression that the job is simply no longer what it once was,” says Petteford.

His concerns notwithstanding, airlines to which *Flight International* spoke say they are not currently experiencing a shortage of applicants, despite demand for pilots being strong.

Unsurprisingly, some of the biggest recruiters are fast expanding low-cost carriers. Norwegian has recruited around 400 pilots for its short- and long-haul divisions this year, and expects to take another 250 in 2015. Wizz Air will take “up to 200” next year and Ryanair, in its next financial year that starts in April, will hire at least 600 new first officers undertaking type-rating training.

Different airlines have different preferences when it comes to bringing in new pilots. Wizz Air prefers to recruit experienced first officers, who typically get a captaincy in four to five years. “At Wizz Air we believe in promoting »



(From left to right) Ryanair and EasyJet are behind much of the recruitment of pilots in Europe; Lion Air is one of Asia’s fastest-growing airlines; Emirates is one of the trio of Gulf airlines that need to fill flightdecks fast to meet ambitious fleet expansion strategies

» internal competence,” says chief pilot Capt David Morgan. “Our captain upgrade programme is much appreciated by our pilots, many of whom used it to step up their careers at Wizz; therefore we prefer to recruit experienced first officers.”

Norwegian says it recruits a mix of experienced captains and first officers, but also young pilots for type-rating courses. Accordingly, the Scandinavian airline provides a mix of training. It undertakes type-rating courses for the Boeing 737 and 787 and also handles an operators’ conversion course for experienced pilots.

HIGH FLYERS

All Virgin Atlantic’s new pilots – apart from its new Future Flyers Programme trainees – join as first officers with a minimum of 3,000h, including 1,000h on commercial jets. Thomson Airways accepts only pilots with the appropriate type ratings.

EasyJet’s head of flight operations, Brian Tyrrell, says the last advertisement the London Luton-based carrier placed for experienced first officers attracted 3,500 responses. However, a Virgin Atlantic spokeswoman cautions: “With the decreasing number of airlines in the UK and reductions in armed forces pilot training, we do expect that in the long term [recruitment] will become more challenging.”

One common factor reported by airlines is that virtually all younger pilots accepted for training go on to pass the tests. This is mainly down to increasingly tough initial screening and aptitude tests that weed out marginal candidates early in the process.

One gateway to the flightdeck – airlines’ sponsored cadet schemes – was largely closed off in the recession that followed 9/11, as carriers tightened their belts.

In October, Virgin Atlantic announced it was resurrecting this entry method with its Future Flyers Programme (FFP), run in partnership with CTC Aviation.

The numbers involved in the FFP are small – just 12 in 2015, the first year of a five-year contract with CTC.

However, the programme not only offers the possibility of school leavers being granted entry into the profession, but also does so with the airline prepared to provide a financial guarantee for those with talent, but who are unable to afford the £109,000 (£171,000) it takes to go from ab initio training to the position of qualified first officer on Virgin’s Airbus A330 fleet.

“Virgin are saying your financial or social background shouldn’t be a limiting factor,” says CTC’s Petteford. “They’re enabling diversity.”

Additionally, the flying training runs in tandem with a newly created three-year degree course run by CTC and Middlesex

Apart from trainees, Virgin Atlantic’s new pilots join as first officers with a minimum of 3,000h



Over the next four years EasyJet is looking to recruit 700 captains and 1,500 co-pilots

“Virgin are saying your financial or social background shouldn’t be a limiting factor”

ANTHONY PETTEFORD

Chief commercial officer, CTC Aviation

University that will see successful candidates emerge with a BSc in ‘professional aviation pilot practice’.

The flight training syllabus consists of six months in ground school, followed by a core skills course on Diamond DA40s in Phoenix, Arizona. Students then return to the UK for simulator training covering instrument and multi-engine flying skills.

Around 3h of upset prevention recovery training is taught in an aerobatic aircraft, plus 4h in the simulator, then further sessions in the simulator add more detailed, Airbus-specific skills.

The final phase is taught at Virgin’s base near Gatwick and is more akin to traditional type-rating training. Trainees move on to the A330 and, ultimately, line operating experience alongside a line-training captain. A multi-crew pilot licence is the ultimate prize.

The Virgin Atlantic scheme, while welcome in providing berths for youngsters unable to raise the substantial funding required today to become a pilot, is relatively small compared with British Airways’ cadet scheme, the Future Pilot Programme.



Norwegian brought around 400 pilots into its short- and long-haul divisions this year

"With Monarch and others I think we'll bring in about 50 experienced captains"

BRIAN TYRRELL

Head of flight operations, EasyJet

wouldn't be able to get into an aircraft," says Craig. "We don't want to see talented people stuck on the outside."

With this in mind, every successful applicant can apply to BBVA, BA's Spanish partner bank, for funding for their training costs. "They apply for a loan that's guaranteed by BA. That effectively removes a huge barrier," says Craig. The trainees normally pay back the money over a 10-year period, after an initial two-year payment holiday.

BA operates two other recruiting streams. Although the flow of ex-military pilots in many Western countries has slowed to a relative trickle as armed forces have shrunk since the Cold War, they are still appreciated by airlines for their skills and discipline.

MILITARY MOVERS

Virgin Atlantic, for example, has taken 10 pilots from military heavy jets this year and funded type-ratings for them – as it is prepared to do if it finds particularly suitable civilian candidates. Around one-third of Virgin pilots are ex-military.

BA tries to smooth the transition from the military to civil sector by liaising with the British armed forces and arranging for pilots within two years of the end of their military careers to visit the airline. Both sides have a chance to evaluate whether they are right for each other.

Under this Managed Paths programme, military pilots can go through the BA selection process while still in uniform. Assuming they pass, BA will offer them a full civil type rating on the fleet they hope to join.

Finally, BA also offers direct entry for pilots transferring from other airlines. If a carrier

is retrenching, "we can expect a spike in applications", says Craig.

BA recently offered jobs to "quite a significant number" of pilots from UK-based Monarch Airlines, which is shrinking and moving from charter and long-haul services to a scheduled low-cost carrier niche.

"In the past six months," adds Craig, "we've had around 2,000 applications from qualified pilots wanting to join BA."

"If someone joins BA with the appropriate type rating, they go through around a month of learning BA procedures before getting on to the flightdeck. If they lack the relevant type rating, the process is two to three months."

Acquiring pilots from a wide variety of backgrounds is deemed to be increasingly important by airlines.

EasyJet, for example, likes to bring in pilots experienced in other sectors, such as freight and turboprops. "They're different," says EasyJet's Tyrrell. "Not better, but different. That's useful. We find they have a different perspective, which helps the business."

EasyJet is also prepared to help out financially, at least in some cases. If it selects pilots who have existing loans from banks or parents, "we bring those loans 'in-house', so we can guarantee them". The carrier is also prepared to put in place funding arrangements for trainees who "show great potential".

The airline is also prepared to recruit tactically when opportunities arise as other airlines retrench, adds Tyrrell: "With Monarch and others I think we'll bring in about 50 experienced captains to the business."

They will be needed: over the next four years EasyJet is looking to recruit 700 captains and 1,500 co-pilots – all to cope with expansion. "Our attrition is tiny. We're a very secure airline. With our expansion rates, it's about five years to get your command. Doing so aged 27 or 28 is really quite normal."

Four to five years is mentioned by several airlines as the typical timeframe before a pilot moves into the left-hand seat, although Norwegian says an experienced first officer

Since the programme was reinstated in 2011 after a decade-long hiatus, around 220 trainees have been selected, with the first tranche of just over 90 due to start taking up their places on BA's single-aisle Airbus fleet in the coming months.

"It's pretty popular," says Lindsay Craig, BA's manager, pilot recruitment. "We normally run one application window per year and get 4,000-5,000 applicants each time."

Initial training takes place at CTC Southampton or CAE Oxford Aviation Academy in the UK, or FTE Jerez, Spain, from where trainees graduate with a 'frozen' airline transport pilot's licence. They are then introduced to multi-crew theory, learning skills such as sharing workloads.

Success rates, says Craig, are in the "high 10%" range, thanks to what he calls a "pretty gruelling" initial selection course. "We don't want anyone to go into training who isn't going to be successful."

As with Virgin's scheme, the rationale behind BA's training course is to spread its recruitment net wider than has been the case in recent years.

Industry observers are concerned that graduates coming into the industry are increasingly being drawn from a narrow social stratum, whose parents have the funds to unroll their offspring through training.

"The whole point of the FPP was to stimulate applications from people who otherwise

» might only have to wait about 12 months: "Our requirement is minimum 4,000 hours with 2,000 hours on the Boeing 737." At the other end of the spectrum, the typical time to command for young pilots at Virgin Atlantic is 10.5 years.

In recent years, the exponential growth of Middle Eastern carriers has seen them attracting thousands of pilots to the Gulf. However, none of the airlines contacted by *Flight International* say they are experiencing much, if any, drain of personnel to that region.

Peter Bellew, Ryanair's director of flight operations, says the number departing for sunnier climes can be 20-30 in some years, but none in others: "We would have budgeted for a certain number of people to leave and we're behind that budget." In fact, he adds: "We've had people coming back from the Gulf."

That latter phenomenon has also been reported by Virgin Atlantic, which says Middle Eastern carriers have actually been the airline's largest single source of pilots joining it over the last two years.

RAMP UP

Ryanair, which next year will start to accept significant numbers of its order for 185 Boeing 737-800s, is gearing up its training system to cope with this influx of equipment.

For pilots who require type rating on the Boeing, the carrier charges applicants €28,500 (\$35,400), but it says this is seemingly not a deterrent, based on the number of job applications it receives. The length of its line training sessions "are double anyone else's", Bellew claims.

"Ryanair has come to be seen in the industry as the safe haven for pilots," he says. "We never let people go. We have no problem in recruiting experienced captains." He adds that recruits to Ryanair contain a significant number of people making career changes. "We have everything from dentists to artists to post-graduate mathematicians [and] plumbers... even priests."

As Ryanair's fleet ramps up it anticipates internally promoting some 220 captains and hiring another 100 externally.

Not all airlines are finding it so easy to recruit, however. Russia has just passed legislation allowing foreign pilots to fly for Aeroflot. Its first non-Russian captain, Klaus Rohlf, a German citizen, made his maiden command flight for Aeroflot in late September.

Russia's flag carrier says it sees recruitment of foreign pilots as "an essential transitional measure to help reduce Russia's current deficit of flight personnel, which will require concerted long-term efforts". It says it received 800 foreign applications – more than 10 for every vacancy – with most candidates coming from nations such as Spain and Italy, where airlines have been retrenching. ■

ASIA

East meets the West

For an expat, working in parts of Asia can bring challenges, but growing airlines are ready to offer attractive packages for pilots

GREG WALDRON SINGAPORE

The Jakarta headquarters of Indonesian low-cost carrier Lion Air has a definite buzz. Formerly the headquarters of a bank, the frenetic ground floor features dozens of counters where travellers pay cash for tickets.

In the offices above, where the carrier's various departments are located, the atmosphere is a bit more sedate – but the sense of a growing, prospering company is palpable. This includes the company's sixth floor operations centre, where young expatriate pilots are not an uncommon sight.

Working in Asia is either a blessing or a bane for a pilot. For a young single pilot with a sense of adventure, few parts of the world are more alluring. For older, married pilots the situation is somewhat different. Trailing

spouses may find it difficult to adjust to life in a foreign city, and may have a hard time getting a job. The kids can also be a problem – spots in quality international schools in the Asia-Pacific can be harder to come by than peak hour slots at London Heathrow.

Irrespective of the pros and cons of living in Asia, however, the airlines in this part of the world need pilots and first officers to keep growing. The demand stems from the Asia-Pacific's booming air travel sector, and the swollen backlogs of both narrowbody and widebody jets in the region. In any given month about 50% of Airbus and Boeing's deliveries go to the Asia-Pacific – half of which go to China. These aircraft need pilots.

It is these raw numbers that lie behind Boeing's forecasts of demand for pilots and technicians in the two decades to 2033. The US airframer predicts that the Asia-Pacific will require 216,000 pilots in the next 20 years – 41% of global demand. This compares with 94,000 (18%) from Europe and 88,000 (17%) from North America.

"Chinese carriers are not asking for young pilots, but very experienced captains"

CAPT BOB COFFMAN

Chairman, APA government affairs committee



Cathay Pacific aims to recruit 250 pilots to fly types such as the 747-8F

"Airlines across the globe are expanding their fleets and flight schedules to meet surging aviation demand in emerging markets," says Boeing. "The industry continues to consider how to address challenges and fill the future pilot pipeline."

VAST ORDERS

Bob Bellitto, director, customer group at Boeing Flight Services says demand for pilots in the region is growing, mainly owing to the vast aircraft orders placed by Asia-Pacific carriers. He acknowledges concerns about a pilot shortage, but feels this actually offers an opportunity for aspiring young people to enter the profession.

"There is potential for a pilot shortage," says Bellitto. "The way you'll find out when there is a shortage is when pilots' pay goes up. When there is a shortage, pilots' pay will go up, flight attendants' pay will go up and we'll all pay more for tickets."

The link to the jobs list on Flightglobal.com shows a number of opportunities in the region, with jobs at carriers as diverse as Shenzhen Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, Spring Airlines, Skymark Airlines, Korean Air, Vietnam Airlines, Air Japan and several others. There is demand for crew on a range of types, from Airbus A320s and Boeing 737s to widebodies.



Airlines are developing domestic talent

"We have seen an increased demand for pilots across [the] Asia-Pacific," says Mark East, managing director of Rishworth Aviation, a recruitment firm specialising in pilots. "The countries that Rishworth has experienced a higher demand for in recent years include Vietnam, Indonesia, China, Taiwan and Korea."

East offers several points of advice to pilots contemplating a move to Asia. He says it is crucial for a pilot coming into the region to adapt his new employers' way of doing things, and that a willingness to embrace change is important. He also suggests reaching out to pilots who have made the jump.

"There are thousands of pilots flying in airlines outside their home country. If you are interested in working a different country the best thing is to talk to other pilots who have already done this and learn about their experience," East says.

He adds that packages tend to be very competitive in the region, but pilots should consider the cost of living in their new home before making the move. Singapore and Japan, for example, are among the most expensive countries in the world, while the cost of living in countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia is very low. Moreover, pilots paid in US dollars have benefited from the strong rise in the currency this year.

The flip side of this, however, is that the cost of employing foreign pilots gives Asian carriers a powerful incentive to develop their own talent base. Of Vietnam Airlines' 900 pilots, 300 are foreigners. Through investment in training at home, the carrier hopes to gradually increase the number of Vietnamese captains.

"The Vietnam Airlines flight training centre has modern equipment and good infra-

structure to facilitate training, education and accumulation of flight experience," says a company spokesman. "We want to domesticise training and recruitment to create jobs for Vietnamese. Moreover, increased domestication in pilot training helps cut costs and gives the carrier a firm base for long-term development." The spokesman adds that prior to 2010 Vietnam Airlines pilots had to go abroad for training. Only a portion of the training occurred in Vietnam at Viet Flight Training JSC (VFT).

"Thanks to the success of technology transfer and shifting a part of training into Vietnam, VFT has helped shorten the basic pilot training abroad from 18 months to 10 months, saving 15% on training cost."

GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE

Indonesia's Lion Air also wants to become self-sufficient in pilots. The low-cost carrier now requires 100-150 pilots annually, divided roughly between captains and first officers, with experience in A320s, 737s and ATR 72s.

"Local pilots will get the first spots, while foreign pilots will make up the balance. But the overall number could be skewed toward foreign pilots," Lion Air's operations director Capt Theodore Midigdo says.

While a major employer of foreign staff, Lion has taken a number of steps in recent years to create its own talent pipeline. The carrier's Angkasa Aviation Academy opened its second campus in 2013, which aims to produce about 150-160 graduates annually. Lion also ordered four A320 simulators from CAE in late 2013.

Moreover, some Asian carriers tend to require flightcrew with more experience – specifically captains. This is especially true of China. This is a trend observed by Capt Bob Coffman, chairman of the government affairs committee at the Allied Pilots Association in the USA.

"Chinese carriers are not asking for young pilots," he says. "They are asking for very experienced captains with thousands of hours and type ratings in the appropriate aircraft. These qualified candidates are hired directly into the left seat at globally competitive salaries. We are not, in general, seeing an exodus of young pilots for overseas jobs."

Perhaps the biggest drawback for any American pilot taking a job in China is the strict seniority system employed by US airlines – and, indeed, a number of Western carriers. Any experienced US captain returning from a stint in China will find himself again at the bottom of the seniority ladder, should he go home.

Still, Coffman feels special circumstances could make a job in Asia attractive. Well-qualified pilots from failed carriers, skilled first officers with left seat experience and





Lion Air needs up to 150 pilots a year

pilots with stagnant carriers could find a job overseas to be highly enticing. He notes he had several friends at failed Hungarian carrier Malév who ended up heading to jobs in Asia.

Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways, however, is always on the hunt for a range of pilots – both with experience and newcomers to the industry. A company spokesman says the carrier aims to recruit more than 250 pilots annually.

Its global second officer programme searches for pilots worldwide. Applicants need a minimum of an airline transport pilot licence or a commercial pilot licence, in addition to flying experience. Cathay says it also continues to recruit candidates with "little or no aviation experience" for its 55-week cadet pilot training programme.

"The aviation industry is a competitive market," says a Cathay spokesman. "Being a leader in the industry, Cathay Pacific offers a competitive remuneration package, international exposure, timely career progression and the opportunity to operate state-of-the-art widebody aircraft that attract candidates to apply."

Fast-growing economies, the rising Asian middle class and aggressive airlines with rapidly growing fleets ensure that pilot demand in the Asia-Pacific will continue to be strong for both local and foreign pilots. The key for foreign pilots in the region is finding the right country and right carrier, and then making the sacrifices necessary for a successful Asian foray. ■



The region's carriers are seeking to recruit both experienced and inexperienced crew

MIDDLE EAST

Gulf keeps growing

The region's three big global connectors are set to continue to lure expat pilots from around the world as their fleet sizes ramp up

MURDO MORRISON DUBAI

For years now, the Gulf has been the go-to region for ambitious pilots looking for a fast-track to the left-hand seat with a growing and profitable airline, flying international routes on new equipment, coupled with a comfortable benefits package and lifestyle.

The region's big three airlines – Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways – have had their pick of the world's aviators, turning down as many applicants as they take on. This year, more than 1,000 pilots will join the three airlines alone.

Visit Dubai and you wonder what is not to like. The rapidly-expanding regional economic hub of gleaming skyscrapers and opulent coastal villas has something for everyone – expat resident or tourist alike – combining a safe environment with a lively entertainment, retail and leisure scene. The downside is the cost and shortage of housing, but Emirates says it mitigates this by offering company-provided accommodation or a living allowance.

Abu Dhabi and Doha, the more sedate bases of Etihad and Qatar Airways respectively – and both national capitals – may not have the 24/7 buzz of their fun-loving neighbour, but they are each shaking off their backwater image with investment in luxury hotels, entertainment and sporting venues, housing developments and apartment blocks. Like Emirates, both airlines stress the benefits of making a new home in the city as much as the job itself.



Emirates will recruit around 400 pilots next year – roughly the same as 2014 – as it takes delivery of 16 Airbus A380s and 13 Boeing 777s. Although some A330s, A340s and older 777s will be retired and crews retrained for newer types, the intake will see overall pilot numbers increase by a tenth. With a low annual retirement rate – because its pilots tend to be younger – Emirates' flightdeck attrition rate is just 2%, says divisional senior vice president of flight operations Capt Alan Stealey.

INTERNAL PROMOTION

Despite a blip three years ago when it urgently needed experienced direct-entry captains, the Dubai airline sticks to its policy of only recruiting first officers. While this might mean experienced captains have to return to second-in-command for a while, Stealey insists it is the best way for Emirates to instill the airline's values in all flightcrew, and ensure opportunities for rising in rank apply equally. "We prefer to promote internally and early," he says.

This means that all first officers have a chance to apply for captains' positions after a minimum of three years with the carrier, although a four-and-a-half year wait is typical, says Stealey. Given that Emirates stresses the long-term nature of a career with the airline, this is not an unreasonable period, he suggests. It is also much shorter than most legacy carriers, where stagnant fleet sizes and strict seniority rules mean co-pilots "might have to spend 20 years in the right-hand seat".

To apply for a job at Emirates, pilots need at least 4,000 flying hours in total in a commercial aircraft, or 2,500 on either an Airbus or Boeing. Those from a low-cost carrier background – who will fly around 800h a year – often get there fastest, and many applicants come from this sector, says Stealey. For a pilot flying several short-hop sectors a day, the



Emirates recruits its A380 pilots from within its Airbus fleet

attraction of intercontinental routes and really seeing the world can be compelling, he adds.

But Emirates also gets applications from much more seasoned pilots. "We had a guy in yesterday with 8,000h of experience," he says. In fact, Stealey maintains he is seeing a change in the sort of pilots coming to Emirates. For a while crisis-hit US airlines were a happy hunting ground, but now, as the North American market has picked up, Europe's ailing carriers are providing a stream of recruits, says Stealey. "If you work for an airline that is downsizing, we can offer stability," he adds.

Emirates – which operates an all-widebody fleet – rarely mixes its Airbus and Boeing pilots, preferring to recruit its A380 crews, for example, from its own A330 cohort or external Airbus pilots. "The philosophies are different and we find it works better to retain pilots within the manufacturer," says Stealey.

Similarly, for its growing 777 fleet, Emirates will tend to take on pilots experienced in flying boeings. Type training is carried out at its own facility in Dubai or overseas.

Emirates is proud of its multinational flight-decks – with over 80 nationalities represented at last count – and puts a great emphasis on cultural understanding in its training. Having the right personality is as important as having the skills, says Stealey. About half the applicants to Emirates are rejected. "We're not afraid to say to someone we won't take you," he says. Every foreign pilot who applies to Emirates is encouraged to travel to Dubai for the interview, "and bring their family too, so they can see the city", says Stealey. Although pilots are occasionally permitted to be based overseas, the vast majority are based in Dubai, where Stealey says the reward package – covering accommodation, children's education, medical insurance, all in an income tax-free environment – is highly attractive.

In Abu Dhabi, Etihad has been even more prolific in its recruitment, taking on 650 first officers and direct-entry captains this year to crew the 24 airliners it will have taken delivery of in 2014, and 18 more that will join the fleet over the next 12 months – as well as backfilling internal promotions. The growth of the UAE flag-carrier, which was set up just over a decade ago, has been rapid, and its current spurt has meant it has had to relax its policy of only recruiting first officers.

VETERAN COMMANDERS

"Our rate of expansion has been very fast and we have had to try to balance experience in the flight deck," says chief operations officer Capt Richard Hill. "At times like this, type specific experience is not as critical as experience in global operations."

Many of these veteran commanders have come from Asian carriers such as Singapore Airlines and Cathay Pacific, which have been "downsizing expat captains", particularly on their Boeing freighter fleets, says Hill.

Another imbalance that has to be tackled is the large number of cadet pilots coming through the ranks. State-owned Etihad has been emphatic about offering cockpit careers

for young Emiratis, although it has also extended the net to international students. Some 70 former ab initio cadets – including 20 non-Emiratis – will graduate as second officers next year. However, they will take at least seven years before they reach the 5,000 flight hours that they will require to be considered for a command.

Direct-entry first officers must have a minimum of 1,500h cockpit experience and will typically take three-and-a-half to five years to reach the left-hand seat. Many recruits come from Airbus and Boeing narrowbody operators, but several have been piloting regional jets. "We are fairly pragmatic about that," says Hill. "Our main requirement is that they have experience in a multicrew environment in a glass-cockpit type."

A rich seam of recruits has been provided by Etihad's partner airlines – those it has taken shareholdings in over recent years, including Air Berlin, Alitalia and Jet Airways. In fact, just over 100 of this year's pilot intake have come from these three airlines, all of which are restructuring their fleets. Being able to access a pool of experienced pilots within the extended Etihad family was one of the reasons the airline made the acquisitions.

"We offer everything a young pilot would want, including flying the latest technology"

CAPT RICHARD HILL

Chief operations officer, Etihad Airways

Next year's recruitment numbers will be somewhat less than this year, although still significant at around 150, because pilots have already been taken on for aircraft due next year, says Hill. As with Emirates, Hill believes Etihad can offer a highly attractive career to expat pilots.

"The reason we've been successful is the opportunities we offer," he says. "We offer everything a young pilot would want: a chance to fulfil a flying career on the latest technology and with a route network that covers the world." ■



Etihad's acquisitions over recent years have provided the carrier with a source of recruits