

TOEIC® Test Success Story

Air France, France

TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test Helps Air France Connect with the World

THE CHALLENGE

No need to be perfectly bilingual to safely land or take-off with an Airbus at Chicago, Tokyo or Toronto. Communications with flight control require only limited technical vocabulary and simple sentences that all professional pilots are very well familiar with. In order to operate on an international scale, pilots must all score at least 4 out of 6 on the technical English tests of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Air France, for its part, has decided to go beyond these requirements and has imposed a minimum level of 5 out of 6, which the company tests on a regular basis (quarterly simulator sessions, yearly in-flight controls and renewed ICAO tests).

However, a pilot also needs to communicate with services on the ground abroad and obviously with his/her passengers. It is in these situations that a good level of general English-language skills, more than technical English, is essential.

A few years ago at Air France, the level of general English was assessed as part of the recruitment process using multiple-choice questionnaires and a so-called "listening" test that were created internally. The problem was that these tests required important internal resources. Also, the candidates would often prepare in advance for the tests, which introduced a bias as to their actual skills.

THE SOLUTION

Fully aware of this issue, Patrick Rooy, Pilots Selection Department Manager at Air France decided to take action. In 2007, he replaced the internal English tests with the TOEIC® Listening and Reading test. It is now this test that the many professionals the company recruits each year must take before applying to take part in the selection process.

Why opt for the TOEIC Listening and Reading test? "We were looking for a test that is recognized at an international level, one that would be easily accepted by both the candidates and the relevant services at Air France," explains Patrick Rooy. "The fact that the TOEIC test is used by major business schools and by the French navy definitely tipped the scale."

As an additional asset, ETS Global has many partners that are approved to organize TOEIC test sessions (2000 throughout the world, 60 in France). "This makes it easy for candidates to take the test at a location near their home," says Patrick Rooy.

The required level of language skills was defined together with the ETS Global team. “Initially we set a level of 800 points, then we increased the requirement to 850 without this affecting the number of applicant candidates. This corresponds to a level in between the B2 and C1 categories on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages,” adds Patrick Rooy. It is also the score that is required of engineering students at the end of their curriculum in order to validate their engineering degree.

THE RESULTS

The results? “Highly satisfactory,” answers the Pilots Selection Department Manager at Air France, who is now considering using the *TOEIC*® Speaking and Writing tests. “There is no doubt that the people we recruit today possess better English language skills.” “Ladies and Gentlemen, we would be glad to answer all your questions concerning our destination.”

To learn more about the TOEIC tests and how they can benefit your organization, contact your local ETS Preferred Network office at www.ets.org/e pn/contacts, visit www.ets.org/toeic or e-mail globalforum@ets.org.

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