

OK

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# JetBlue: Hiring crewmembers with the skills to thrive

## Challenge

To improve on training attrition with new crewmembers joining the team.

## Action

A job analysis revealed the critical skills and qualifications and informed a new hiring assessment.

## Results

Overall training attrition dropped by 25% after implementing the assessment.

## Challenge

JetBlue has built its brand on its friendly customer experience on the ground and in the air, and that's why it's so important that this "Best Place to Work" enables all employees (known as crewmembers) to deliver on the company's mission to inspire humanity. In 2013, JetBlue noticed an opportunity to improve training attrition among its reservations agents — those who help customers calling 1-800 JETBLUE.

Being a call center employee is tough. Crewmembers in this role need strong technical skills to quickly and efficiently navigate JetBlue's reservations system. They also need to have strong customer service and communications skills, along with the patience and empathy to help inexperienced fliers, or customers facing weather events or delays at the airport. It's challenging to hire candidates with both a natural desire to be helpful, and the technical skills to be effective — especially at pace with the company's growth.

## **Action**

JetBlue's People Assessment & Analytics team partnered with the customer support leadership team to identify the most difficult parts of the job, as well as the characteristics of effective performance. Focus groups, on-the-job observance, and crewmember and supervisor interviews were used to gather this qualitative data.

As for quantitative analysis, the team asked crewmembers to rate the difficulty of specific job tasks. Separately, the team asked supervisors to rank the importance of specific job Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics (KSAO). The analysis included more than 600 crewmembers.

By comparing crewmember-rated tasks with supervisor-rated KSAOs, the team identified authentic key attributes of successful call center crewmembers that were divided into two main groups: KSAOs that candidates must have to get the job, and KSAOs that can be learned.

To screen for these necessary KSAOs, JetBlue introduced a call simulation test to the hiring process. During the test, candidates conduct three test calls that can accurately and consistently test for critical thinking, communication, data entry, and technical competency. To better serve Spanish-speaking Customers, JetBlue also recently launched a bilingual (Spanish/English) version of the assessment.

## **Results**

When it comes to crewmembers hired under the new process, JetBlue found a solid relationship between assessment scores and eventual success in training.

- After introducing the assessment, training failure-based attrition fell by 75%, and overall training attrition fell by 25%.

- Candidates who score highest on the assessment are more likely to pass the first training evaluation at a rate of 90% or higher, compared to 76% for those with lower assessment scores.
- The first evaluation in the training program is the highest hurdle and candidates who pass this training evaluation are likely to complete the entire program.

As a result of these positive outcomes, JetBlue has been working to apply a similar process to hiring for all customer-facing positions. Already, the team is seeing similar success with its new flight attendant staffing process. Next, the team is looking to rollout a new assessment for hiring airport crewmembers.

*More than 15 years ago, the first JetBlue Airways employees set out “to bring humanity back to air travel,” and together decided on their values (Safety, Caring, Integrity, Passion and Fun) before the airline had its first aircraft, or even a name.*

*Today, with more than 18,000 employees, JetBlue flies to more than 90 BlueCities across the U.S., Latin American and the Caribbean, and has been ranked “Highest in Customer Satisfaction Among Low-Cost Carriers in North America” by J.D. Power for 11 consecutive years.*