



SASO – System Approach for Safety Oversight

SASO Change Management Off and Running

One of the primary goals of the Flight Standards Service in 2007 is the full implementation of the next version of the Air Transportation Oversight System, ATOS 1.2. Numerous AFS headquarters and field offices/staffs are directly involved in this effort, with principal change management support being the responsibility of the System Approach for Safety Oversight (SASO) Program Office team.

“ATOS 1.2 represents an important enhancement in AFS’s capabilities, and providing change management support for improvements like this is what SASO is all about,” comments Estrella Gonzales, SASO Deputy Program Manager and Change Management Lead. “We are truly excited about our role in helping AFS take this important step toward the future.”

ATOS 1.2, a follow-on to the system in use since 1998, will extend the use of risk-based certification and surveillance to all CFR Part 121 air carrier certificate management teams. This effort, also one of the FAA Administrator’s priorities for 2007, will greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the FAA’s safety and regulatory oversight of this critical segment of the aviation industry. It is also an important element of AFS’s ability to manage the projected increase in air carrier operations in the next ten years.

In support of the ATOS 1.2 implementation, the SASO Program Office is working closely with both AFS-900, responsible for the overall transition, and AFS-500, responsible for training. In addition, at the center of the transition effort are eight regional Points of Contact (POC) that are providing critical planning and coordination support for the regions and field offices. Development of the ATOS 1.2 application itself is being managed by AQS-200 and the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, with direct support from AFS-900.

An essential element of the ATOS 1.2 implementation strategy is the use of three “Key Sites” to test both the transition strategy, including training and communications outreach, and the

performance of the redesigned ATOS 1.2 system. By closely monitoring the initial use of the system at these sites, AFS will be able to see what is working and what is not, and gain insight into such factors as the effectiveness of the training and communications approaches. The overall goal of Key Site Testing is to surface problems early, when they are more easily manageable, and to suggest methods to “fine tune” the transition processes prior to the full field implementation of ATOS 1.2 at the end of the year.

The key sites were chosen to represent the wide spectrum of air carrier operations: at the big end is United Airlines, with maintenance offices at SFO and operations at DEN; then midsize Colgan Air with offices at IAD, and finally Aerodynamics, a supplemental carrier with six aircraft operating out of Detroit. The United CMO is also notably a current user of ATOS.

The first major step in the key site process was initiated in January when the SASO Program Office conducted a series of focus groups at each of the sites to solicit opinions regarding what is needed to make ATOS 1.2 successful, especially from a communications and change management perspective. The focus groups were led by change management facilitators and allowed the field staffs the opportunity to offer their opinions of the proposed implementation strategies, and to voice their concerns and provide the field’s perspective on what a successful implementation would look like. Jack Grossman, Manager of the United CMO, commented on the focus group effort: “These ‘change practitioners’ were highly skilled professionals well versed in their respective fields. I have to tell you, it was quite refreshing to see them at work and even more refreshing knowing their presence symbolized the level of commitment the FAA is demonstrating to identify change management strategies and increase stakeholder commitment with respect to implementing ATOS 1.2.”

Concludes Estrella Gonzales of the SASO Program Office: “One of the SASO Program’s main goals is to put people first, and then address technology and processes. The up-front emphasis by the ATOS 1.2 team on the people aspects of managing change goes a long way in meeting this critical goal.”

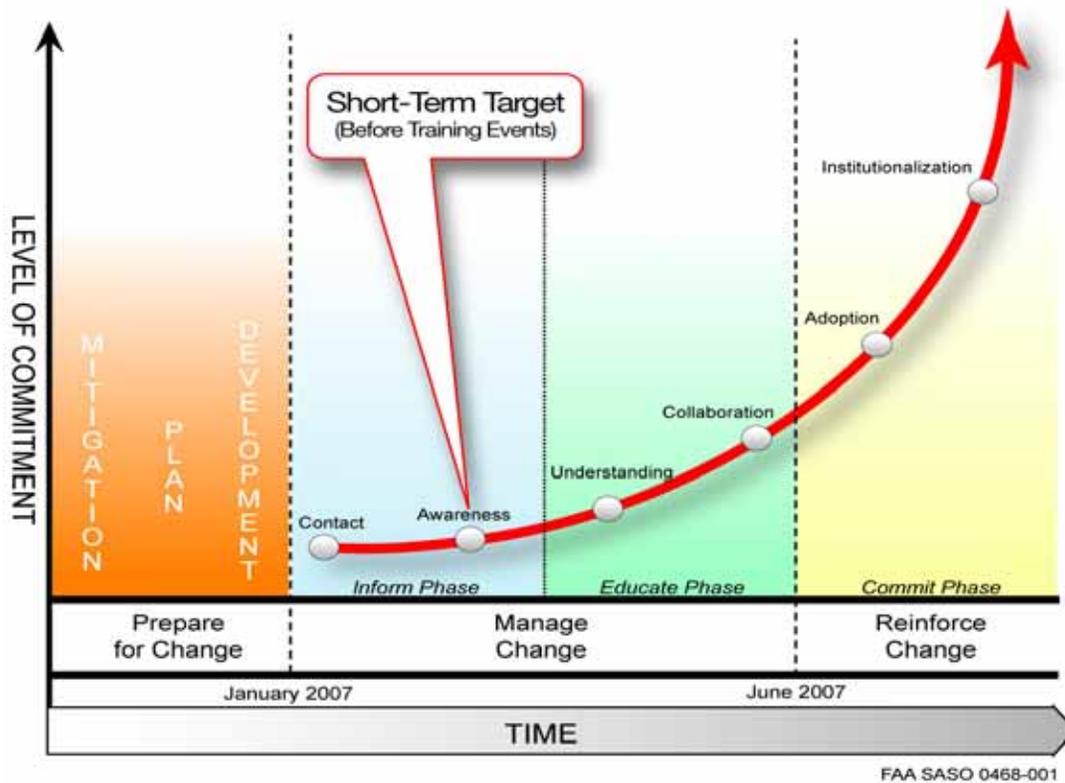


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The Commitment Curve: Measuring change progress through stakeholder commitment to ATOS, Version 1.2

The SASO Change Management team is applying a variation of the Patterson-Conner Commitment Curve (1982) to help ensure a smooth and successful transition into ATOS, Version 1.2. The Commitment Curve is a change management tool and framework that represents a cognitive map of what commitment is, what must be done to prepare for it, and how it develops. The goal of the commitment curve is to reduce resistance while simultaneously working to attain gradually-increased levels of acceptance and preparedness for the ATOS, Version 1.2, Implementation. The commitment curve continuum helps steer and accelerate stakeholder progression from one commitment stage to another (for example, from awareness to understanding).¹ Movement from one commitment stage to another indicates that progress is being made.

The Commitment Curve



Assessing stakeholder perceptions and plotting these against the Commitment Curve, will:

- Provide an understanding of employee commitment towards the ATOS, Version 1.2 change initiative;
- Identify resistance to the ATOS, Version 1.2, transition; and
- Define and direct customized change management intervention action planning to increase stakeholder buy-in and commitment to ATOS, Version 1.2.

¹Conner, D.R. and Patterson, R.W., “Building Commitment to Organizational Change.” *Training and Development Journal* 36, (April 1982): 18-30.