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MAKING MANUALS A THING OF THE PAST



Bombardier Dash 8Q-400: Tyrolean Airways is the first trial customer for the CLP Q400 Software

Troubleshooting, regular maintenance and the training of maintenance staff are three items where airlines can spend lots of time and money. However, Austrian-based Infotools now offers a solution which should lead airline owners of the Bombardier Dash 8Q-400 aircraft to huge cost savings. Heiko Link reports.

When a caution light in one of Tyrolean Airways' Bombardier Dash 8Q-400 aircraft illuminates, Infotools' Claus Kirchebner doesn't need to look through hundreds of pages of user manuals and documentation. Instead, with just a few clicks of the mouse – or at worst case, inputting a four digit fault code – he can quickly help the pilot identify the fault to avoid an expensive back to ramp event.

"The Bombardier Q400 is a state-of-the-art aircraft which contains many system computers," begins Kirchebner. "For this reason, we had the idea of developing software which allows quick access to all required information. Our main advantage is that not only do we write the software programmes, we are also users with many years' of experience of the Q400."

Kirchebner works as a maintenance controller and instructor for trial user

and first customer, Tyrolean Airways. Together with his partner Martin Zöhrer – also a maintenance controller working for the same airline – they founded the Infotools and developed the CLP Q400 software.

When one of the 98 lamps in the caution light panel (CLP) of the aircraft illuminates, the pilot calls the operator who then selects the same caution light in the software.

"The technical department and the maintenance control centre can begin with a logical analysis of the failure described by the pilot when the crew contacts the maintenance organisation without any time delay and without having already access to the aircraft," states Michael Geis, Augsburg Airways' maintenance vice-president.

The starting page provides hyperlinks to the following information to the operator: Fault Isolation Manual (FIM), Removal and Installation (AMM),

Illustrated Parts Catalogue (IPC), System Descriptions, Step by Step procedure for possible Resets, most needed Line Replaceable Units (LRUs), View and Location, Minimum Equipment List (MEL) Proximity Sensor Electronic Unit (PSEU) Readout Animation and an electrical schematic.

The main difference to the manufacturer's paper-based manual is in the way the information is sorted. Instead of chapters, where searching can take time, the system provides hyperlinks.

"These shortcuts to the mandatory maintenance instructions of the manufacturer are a big advantage," explains Kirchebner. "You no longer have to search through hardcopies or in files on your computer. Simply open the hyperlink and away you go! The operator can print the instructions and LRUs if he needs to and work through some of them together with the pilot."



Maintenance staff and software developers: Claus Kirchebner (sitting) and Martin Zöhrer from Infotools

Kirchebner and Zöhrer see many benefits resulting from the use of their software. For example, faster troubleshooting means shorter ground times per plane and less back to ramp events which result into a higher customer satisfaction. Delay times are reduced which reflects positively on the reliability of the fleet itself. Furthermore, shorter job set-up times raise the efficiency of maintenance work, whilst the planning of faults when the aircraft is grounded will become more effective because of the step by step readouts of the PSEU and the Audio and Radio Control Display Unit Simulator.

As for the price for this software, Kirchebner says the monthly rate per aircraft will depend on the size of the fleet and the duration of the contract. "Basically you can say that the money you save when you use our software for just one event and aircraft per month within the maintenance control will exceed its costs by far," he claims. "Think of the back to ramp event you have avoided because of a positive reset."

Kirchebner adds that customers will need to undergo thorough training sessions, because the Austrian market doesn't like to sell products without it. One reason being that the customers may only use a few of the features the software offers.

To fulfil the system requirements, all

you need is Windows XP or a newer operating system. Installation is claimed to take less than a minute, while updates can be downloaded for free every four months. They get tested by Tyrolean Airways before their release. "The regular updates and releases ensure the high quality standard within the Lufthansa Regional Operation," confirms Geis.

"As an aircraft owner for many years I immediately realised the benefits of this software tool."

Clemens Bollinger, aviation marketing expert

If the user needs software support he can email the message to Infotools who promise to answer within 24 hours. Kirchebner is absolutely convinced that he will not get messages reporting a system standstill: "Once the software is installed it will run all the time," he affirms. "Only problems within the customers' system, such as viruses or internal server problems will affect it."

Tyrolean Airways' line maintenance manager, Gregor Burgstaller says users will soon realise when using this programme that it was developed by maintenance people for maintenance people.

"The manufacturers' manual can simply be opened from the user

interface and as a result, job set-up times and ground times can be considerably reduced," he claims. "We've integrated the CLP Troubleshooting Software into the processes of our maintenance control centre as well as the line maintenance, and noticed that this tool brought all our technicians and maintenance controllers on the same level of knowledge."

The four customers currently using the CLP Q400 Software are Luxair, Croatia Airlines, Tyrolean Airways and Augsburg Airways. Aviation marketing expert, Clemens Bollinger hopes that more customers will realise the software's potential and that the global distribution of the Infotools product will increase.

"As an aircraft owner for many years I immediately realised the benefits of this software tool," he concludes. "This is exactly what maintenance shops and OPS departments need: a reliable and easy to use software solution for trouble shooting and daily maintenance support which saves huge amounts of time and money year on year." |

infotools@chello.at