

# Non-Standard Crewmembers

*Leadership, followership, and inquiry/advocacy/assertion.*

## Standardization

Atlas Air outlines the responsibilities of Pilot Flying and Pilot Monitoring duties in the FOM. It also talks about Leadership and Followership, how the Captain is the final authority in the safe and efficient operation of the aircraft, and should solicit the input of the First Officer and any other additional flight crewmembers. As all new hires are First Officers, it is your duty to practice good followership by asking questions, advocating for best practices, and asserting yourself if and when necessary.

The section of CRM Concepts in the FOM says it best, “Integrated flight crews, adhering to the published standards and working as a team, are far less likely to experience an undesired aircraft state, much less an accident or incident.”

So how do we deal with crewmembers who continually make non-standard callouts or operate the aircraft in a way that is unpredictable to the other crewmember (i.e. you)? Well, it's a balancing act. On one hand, we all want to “get along” with the other crewmembers so as to keep things civil in the cockpit, but on the other hand, constantly having to guess “what’s next?” can lead to mistakes being made. Tact is one of the best places to start. Tact is defined as adroitness and sensitivity in dealing with others or with difficult issues. If a crewmember is being non-standard, simply ask them if the procedure has changed. That way you put the ball in their court and give them a chance to reflect and they can answer with what they believe to be true. One of two things will happen, they will recognize that they’re doing something non-standard and explain why they are doing it that way, or they will return to standard. If they don’t know what the procedure or callout is supposed to be, now you have an opportunity to ask another question, such as, “I thought it was supposed to be done this way?” or “In training, we were taught to do it this way.” Now you’ve opened up a dialogue, hopefully.

Sometimes, however, time compressed events don’t allow for a conversation about how things are supposed to be done according to the book. In those instances, you need to make a decision about how you will respond. An example of this is during a takeoff recently, a Captain made the callout at 80 knots by simply saying, “80 knots” instead of the “80 knots, thrust set” that we all expect. So I simply added, “Thrust set, check” to roundout his non-standard callout. The rest of the flight had a number of small issues

similar to this one where the captain did unexpected things that kept us guessing. Sometimes the only thing you can do is drag the other crewmember into standardization by picking up their slack and refusing to deviate from the norm.

**The FOM describes inquiry/advocacy as asking questions to investigate and/or clarify current plans of action when time is not a threat. Assertiveness requires us to state critical information and/or solutions with appropriate persistence with a focus on what is right, not who is right during time critical situations.**

Regardless of your rank or role in the cockpit, it is okay to express your discomfort with a certain situation by saying, “I am not comfortable with this.” That phrase should trigger everyone on the flight deck to try and resolve the situation that’s causing that discomfort. It’s better to say something and live with momentary discomfort than keep quiet and potentially end up violated or deceased. Most crewmembers at Atlas Air are very standard and do not consciously deviate from the published procedures in normal situations, but every now and then you’ll come across a pilot who has the “best” tech-cedure (technique + procedure) for every situation. Sometimes techniques work, but for the meat and potatoes of what we do on the line, the procedures outlined in FCOM Volume 1 and the FOM will make for the most predictable and safest outcomes.

If after a flight full of inquiry, advocacy, and assertion, a crewmember refuses to practice standard operating procedures or “see the light,” you can always contact your Mentor and/or the Professional Standards committee which is designed specifically to handle non-standard crewmembers without involving the Company. Being a new hire at Atlas Air does not mean you have to be a mindless follower. Captains and other crewmembers are all fallible. Ask questions when you’re unsure, advocate for what you know to be correct, and be assertive when the safety or legality of the flight is at risk.

### **Conclusion**

As always, the information provided here is current as of the writing and to the best of the authors’ knowledge. The Mentoring Committee is here to help. We will do our best to answer simple questions and direct you to the proper Committee for more specific queries. Thanks for reading!