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Sounding Board

Sounding Board: Kristen Michaels, AviationManuals Director of Operations

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Kristen Michaels is director of operations for AviationManuals, a provider of Safety Management System (SMS) software and operations manuals, international procedures manuals, minimum equipment lists, emergency response plans and other services. Clients include business aviation flight departments, aircraft management companies, and owners and operators. Michaels oversees operations and strategy implementation. She joined the company 2.5 years ago and was an account and marketing manager for Apollo Jets.

What do flight departments need the most help with?

“They want to fly. They don’t want to do paperwork. We are here to make their lives easier by helping them manage their documentation and SMS.”

What is your most popular product?

“The product that our clients come to us for most is the International Operations Manual. Those, along with the LOAs are time-sensitive and can be difficult to do on their own. Information is constantly changing. (Our advisors) keep clients up to date on what is going on internationally.”

When did AviationManuals begin moving from paper to electronic products?

“Up until the president bought the company in 2011, everything was sent out on paper. Even internally, documentation was paper-based, which was unnecessary because the technology was there. Pretty quickly, we moved to a more-electronic, more tech-forward company. Rather than offering paper as a first option, we offer electronic (manuals). Pilots often carry their manuals and forms on an iPad. It’s much easier and also better for the environment.”

What was the biggest challenge in moving to electronic products?

“I think for us it was a pretty seamless transition. The biggest thing is getting clients comfortable with the idea. A lot of our clients jumped right on board, but there are some people that are very comfortable having everything tangible, that they can touch and feel. When we switched our products to be electronic-based, some clients needed a little bit of help with the transition, so we still do end up producing some paper copies.”

What is next for the company?

“We’ve prepared over the last year for trends heading toward new industries, such as unmanned aircraft systems and even new companies starting up with their full focus being drone operations. We’ve created a suite of products to help them. It’s a work in progress because the regulations aren’t really there yet.”

How big is that part of your business?

“We thought it was going to be a little bit bigger. It’s kind of slow to progress on the regulatory side, but it will ramp up soon. With a lot of our clients, their companies decided to fly drones and didn’t know where to put them, so they gave the drones to the flight departments to take care of. Their flight departments called us and said, ‘How do we handle this?’ It’s kind of grown from there.”

You mentioned AviationManuals is growing. How so?

“We’re definitely growing. From a revenue standpoint, from an employee base, from a product-line base, we are growing on all fronts.”

You recently returned from a leadership conference that you mentioned inspired you. What was your biggest takeaway?

“Overall, it was on how to really determine your goals as a leader and what inspired you so you can figure out how to inspire others. How you handle change and how you handle stress can affect those around you.”

What do you enjoy most about your job?

“I have my hands in literally everything that we have going on at the company. I like that the days are never the same. It keeps everything really exciting. I can’t say I ever have time to be bored.”

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