

Play by play

Commercial Airplanes Structures engineers turn to PlayBook to tap the years of experience, knowledge and best practices of their colleagues

By Kathrine K. Beck and photo by Gail Hanusa/Boeing

In professional sports, a playbook gives team members descriptions and diagrams of what to do on the field, a knowledge of plays and formations based on past success. Boeing Structures Engineering has a playbook, too.

"The kind of information that's in the PlayBook, you really can't find anywhere else," said Barclay Fitzpatrick, a structural analyst with Boeing Commercial Airplanes and part of the team that developed PlayBook. It's a Web site showcasing Structures and Payloads Engineering best practices and lessons learned. Using PlayBook is like having a conversation with someone who's done it all before, and who has learned from many years of experience what works and what doesn't, he said.

The Web site contains information provided by hundreds of Boeing experts on technical subjects across all Commercial Airplanes programs. It gives engineers quick access to processes they need to do their jobs—processes that are specific to Boeing. It helps engineers who are managing projects learn how things are done best, according to Fitzpatrick. And it lets Commercial Airplanes employees collaborate

and share knowledge and best practices—actions that can help Boeing thrive.

"This is knowledge specific to our business, not technical fundamentals learned in engineering school," said Deborah Limb, Structures Engineering director, Commercial Airplanes. "The goal is to capture standard work and best practices and help teams see where they fit into processes."

PlayBook chapters address subjects from across the engineering design cycle: program organization and management, work statement and schedule negotiation, design and drawing release, working with suppliers, and certification. It also includes practical tips on subjects such as measuring engineering performance, writing an effective work statement, building plans and schedules, and interacting with suppliers the right way.

Susan Gulyas, a structures design engineer in Commercial Airplanes, leads the PlayBook content

development team. PlayBook was designed to address the fact that "across different commercial airplane programs, people were conducting engineering business differently," she said. "We need to allow for creativity in engineering, but some things need to be done the same way. Having them in one place makes it easy to find them."

The PlayBook is searchable and continuously updated. It includes videos, text and online demos with subject-matter experts providing step-by-step audio explanations. Pop-up menus allow for quick navigation to any section.

Kevin Beyer, an Associate Technical Fellow who works on 747-8 trailing edge wing structures, was one of the subject-matter experts consulted for the project. He called PlayBook "very beneficial," as it provides new engineers with the knowledge they need to do their work efficiently and helps more experienced engineers with guidelines and best practices. Without it, he said, "you could go down a path that will take you a lot more time and a lot more effort."

Other Commercial Airplanes organizations are looking at using an application such as PlayBook, said Sophia Zervas-Berg, senior manager, Structures Engineering. "The PlayBook has the potential to be used across the enterprise," she said. ■

kathrine.k.beck@boeing.com

Questions? From Outlook, send an e-mail to Susan Gulyas or Bradley J. Sleder.

PHOTO: Structural analyst Barclay Fitzpatrick (left) and structures design engineer Susan Gulyas are part of the PlayBook content development team, compiling Boeing expertise in an easy-to-use format.