



“We don’t have to reinvent the wheel every time.”

—Shawn Knight, flight support generalist, St. Louis
PHOTO: PETER GEORGE/BOEING



“Flying a variety of programs is exactly the challenge we all hope for.”

—Dan Wells, experimental test pilot, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.
PHOTO: PAUL PINNER/BOEING

Talent search

New Boeing test organization gets resources to where they are needed—and quickly

By Kathrine Beck

When one of the tower operators at the Boeing site in Mesa, Ariz., had to take a sudden extended medical leave in May, it could have meant trouble for the Flight Operations team in Mesa, home of the Apache helicopter.

It wasn't a job that just anyone could perform.

Tower operators are highly trained and must be certified by the Federal Aviation Administration. They provide air traffic control, support flight testing and work with local air traffic control authorities to keep the skies safe.

But Dan Edwards, Apache test pilot and Mesa's Flight Operations manager, was able to get a fill-in right away.

It's an example of how Boeing Test

& Evaluation is able to place talent and resources throughout the enterprise as needed. This new companywide organization brought together elements of the test and evaluation organizations of Commercial Airplanes; Defense, Space & Security; and Engineering, Operations & Technology last year.

When fully integrated as a part of Engineering Operations & Technology, the test and evaluation group will have more than 7,000 employees at 78 different sites throughout the United States. And it will be able to share those resources as it did when the Mesa site urgently needed a tower operator, said Shawn Knight, a flight support generalist from St. Louis who was the replacement sent

to Arizona. “We don’t have to reinvent the wheel every time,” he said.

As a flight support generalist, Knight has many duties, from taking care of aviation life-support equipment and performing radio checks to briefing pilots. He had experience as a tower operator when he joined Boeing.

“I fit the bill, so they asked if I was interested in going out there to help out,” he said.

The process was quick and smooth because both Edwards and Knight work for Boeing Test & Evaluation.

Edwards said that with Knight on board, the Mesa operations “didn’t even slow down. We kept rolling.”

Getting talent to where it is needed

quickly is happening throughout Boeing Test & Evaluation, which provides many services beyond flight test.

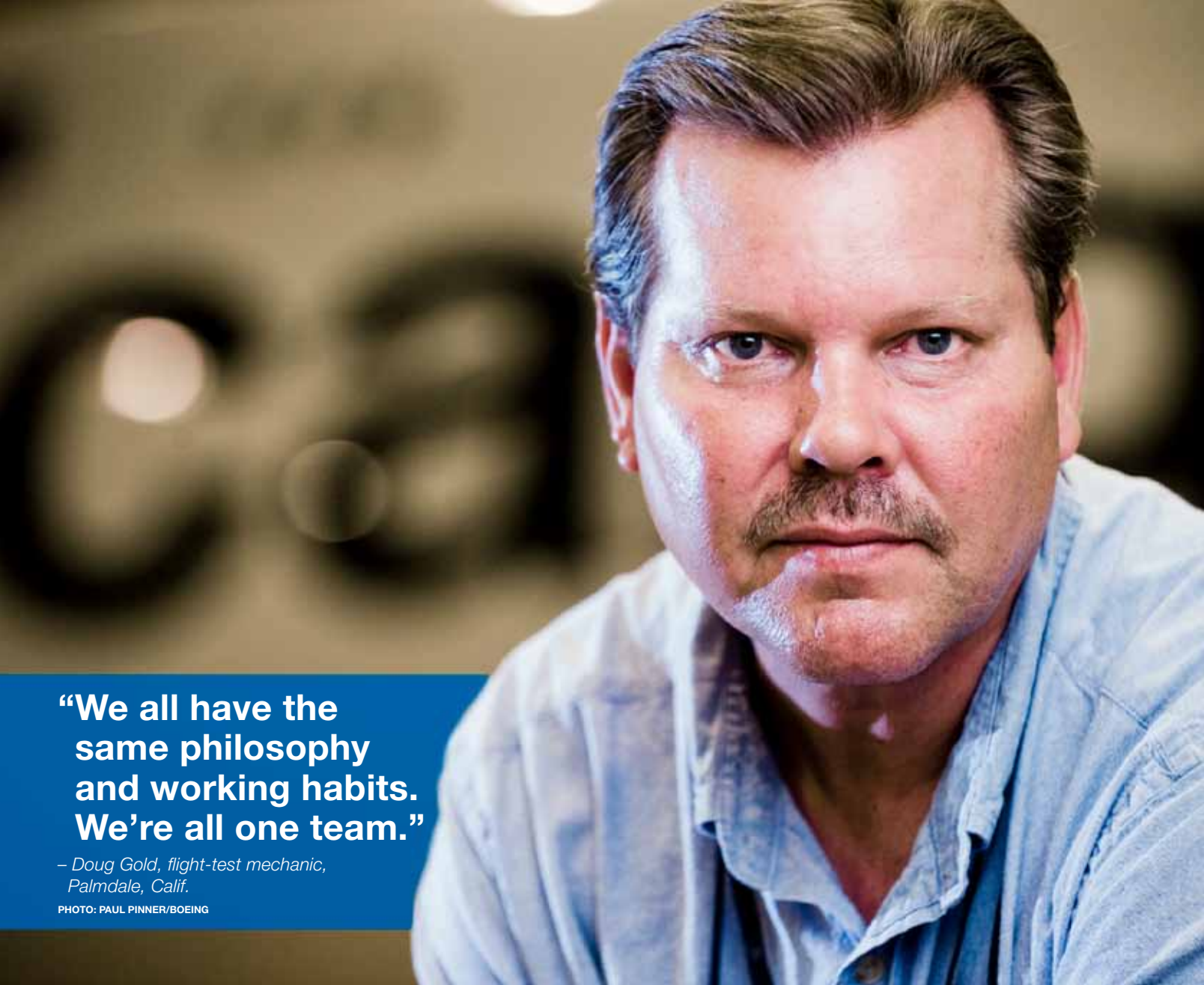
Just as Edwards found Knight quickly through the integrated organization, Dan Wells, an experimental test pilot at Edwards Air Force Base in California, was tapped to meet a sudden need from another part of Boeing.

Pilot testing was scheduled for a new Digital Automatic Flight Control System in the MH-47G Chinook helicopter during a peak production time earlier this year and there weren't enough test pilots available.

A search for qualified test pilots within Boeing Test & Evaluation revealed that Wells was a helicopter test pilot as

well as an airplane test pilot—he was flying the C-130 at Edwards as part of the Avionics Modernization Program. He'd also flown Chinooks in the Army. Wells went to Philadelphia to learn the differences between the MH-47G and Chinook CH-47, then on to the test site in Middletown, Del., for the flight testing.

Consolidating a number of organizations into Boeing Test & Evaluation has also helped alleviate strains on scarce resources. The 747-8 flight-test program, for example, was shifted to Palmdale, Calif., in August 2009 by Commercial Airplanes and Boeing Test & Evaluation to avoid problems that could have resulted from simultaneously



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PHOTO: PAUL PINNER/BOEING

running two major flight-test programs—the 787 and 747-8—from Boeing Field in Seattle.

“The purpose of BT&E was to bring together test and evaluation resources from across the company, and we’ve been able to demonstrate that right here where we have blended commercial and military teams to execute the 747-8 test program,” said John Stolting, Boeing’s Southwest Region director of Flight Operations in Palmdale.

“We had ground space that could accommodate the airplane, and a lot of people with strong test experience who wanted to add to their skills by working on commercial airplane test operations,” he added. “People were

very excited and still are, and the teams have blended well.”

Doug Gold, a flight-test mechanic in Palmdale, agreed. “It was a good move for Boeing to utilize a facility that they already had,” he said. “And it’s nice to work with other Boeing people who are 1,300 miles (2,100 kilometers) away. We all have the same philosophy and working habits. We’re all one team.”

Chuck Martin, project manager for Ramp Support in Palmdale, put it another way. He called the formation of Boeing Test & Evaluation “one of the best things the company has done in regard to the test world. Why shouldn’t we bring all this talent together?” ■

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