The CAA has completed its second client satisfaction survey. The two-stage survey was carried out late last year by independent researchers, Colmar Brunton Research Ltd. During the first stage, detailed interviews with industry members focussed on the aviation industry's needs and expectations of the CAA, as well as the quality of the CAA's service. During the second stage 330 randomly selected CAA-clients took part in a telephone questionnaire covering many of the same issues as well as some further specifics. CAA staff also took part in the survey to see whether the CAA sees itself the way industry does.

The survey findings have become an important part of the CAA's business planning, highlighting areas the CAA is doing well, as well as areas that need to be focussed on and improved.

Summary of key findings

Preliminary Qualitative Research

- Six in-depth motivational interviews were conducted in October 1998 with individuals selected from a range of CAA customer groups. The primary objective was to highlight key issues regarding the aviation industry’s needs and expectations of the CAA. The issues raised were used further in the quantitative stage of the research.
- Staff were also interviewed in October 1998.

Quantitative Research

- A total of 330 telephone interviews were undertaken among randomly-selected clients. Interviews were conducted between 24 November and 11 December 1998. The average interview duration was 18 minutes.

For a 95% confidence level, the maximum margins of error were:
- ± 5.4% (total sample of 330)
- ± 12% (those who contact CAA frequently, sample of 65)
- ± 6% (those who contact CAA infrequently, sample of 256)

- During the same time period, staff were also surveyed using self-completion questionnaires. A total of 141 staff (92% of all staff) responded.
Overall satisfaction with CAA lower than 1995

- Frequent-contact clients are polarised about the overall service they receive from the CAA (32% extremely/quite satisfied and 32% very/quite dissatisfied). They are now less satisfied than in 1995 (32% in 1998 compared with 43% in 1995), although this is not a statistically significant decrease.

- Infrequent-contact clients say their satisfaction with the service received from the CAA has remained similar to the 1995 measure (extremely/quite satisfied 56% in 1998 compared with 52% in 1995).

Frequent contact clients are those who have formally contacted the CAA four or more times in the last 12 months (eg for an audit or inspection, spot check, certification, or licensing).

What do clients want from the CAA?

- As in 1995, clients feel the main role of the CAA is to maintain and ensure safety standards.

- Clients who are dissatisfied with the CAA say they would be more satisfied if there were improvements in staff knowledge, particularly in terms of their industry knowledge, their aviation knowledge and experience, their management knowledge and their ability to provide solutions.

- This is supported by the detailed interviews in which clients were asked what they would focus on if they were the Director. Clients said they would focus primarily on internal issues, and common suggestions were:
  - encouraging more communication between different parts of the CAA
  - customer service training
  - having more direction from the top
  - increasing staff performance

Clients’ perceptions of the CAA are mixed

Profile and services

- Clients are most satisfied with CAA’s high industry profile (17% of frequent-contact clients found this excellent as well as 18% of infrequent-contact clients).

- Regarding making the industry responsible for themselves, 9% of frequent-contact clients found this excellent as well as 11% of infrequent-contact clients.

- The CAA’s international credibility was considered excellent by 9% of frequent-contact clients and 11% of infrequent-contact clients.

- Clients are negative about CAA’s services in two main areas.
  - 35% of frequent-contact clients and 19% of infrequent-contact clients say the CAA’s provision of value for money is extremely poor.
  - 26% of frequent-contact clients and 13% of infrequent-contact clients rated the CAA as extremely poor when questioned about whether it has adequate resources to do its job properly.

- Clients are less satisfied than they were in 1995 in three main areas:
  - making the industry responsible properly
  - having international credibility
  - maintaining safety

This latter drop is of particular concern as clients also feel that maintaining safety standards is the CAA’s main role.

Staff accessibility, knowledge and experience

- Clients who contact the CAA frequently were asked about its staff. These clients are:
  - most satisfied with CAA’s staff’s accessibility and their aviation knowledge and experience (43% say excellent, and 37% say very good).
  - least satisfied with consistency of staff responses and solutions to issues (50% say extremely poor, and 42% say very poor).

- Satisfaction with staff has generally fallen since 1995.
Clients are positive about CAA communications

- Overall, clients are positive about all publications. *Vector* is perceived to be the most useful publication (79% find it extremely or very useful).
- Over half feel each publication has helped improve the way they do things. Clients feel that *Vector* has helped them most to improve the way they do things (75%).
- Clients are most positive about CAA’s publications being credible. *Vector* is perceived to be the most credible publication (83% find it extremely or very credible).

Written communication & videos useful, credible & accurate

- Overall, the CAA’s clients are more likely to feel that its written information is useful (81% find it is excellent or very good), credible (81% find it is excellent or very good) and accurate (80% find it excellent or very good).
- Overall, most clients were unsure of the CAA’s current verbal communications. This suggests they have not experienced CAA seminars or workshops.
- Over two-thirds of clients (71%) want to receive more information than they do currently. The most commonly mentioned information needs were rules, other legislation and advisory circulars, which are available free on the CAA’s web site.

CAA staff more positive than clients

Although CAA staff were generally more positive about the CAA than clients, they were also aware of many of the issues raised by clients, in particular:

- The need to improve cooperation between work areas
- The need to improve communication between employees and management.

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The Chairperson’s Promise

The recent Colmar Brunton survey shows many positives. However, the survey also shows that in some areas, and particularly in the area of customer service, we could do better.

The CAA is a regulatory agency and while we can never be everyone’s best friend, we can do many elements of that job in a user-friendly manner. That means in particular, improving internal communications to provide consistent and efficient service. In short, we must provide value for money.

There is no doubt that considerable progress has been made in recent years, and the CAA is a more effective and capable organisation than ever before. It is seen as a world leader for much of what it does, but there is no room for complacency.

The CAA has an ongoing improvement policy, and it appears that the area of customer service, on the basis of this survey, needs attention.

The Authority has asked the Director and his team to give priority to addressing this issue while continuing to meet the CAA’s key objective of safety at reasonable cost.

It is my challenge to ensure that in a year’s time, when we undertake the next survey, there will have been a significant improvement.

Rodger Fisher  
Chairperson  
Civil Aviation Authority