Developing Leadership Skills for Air Traffic Control Training Course



19 - 23 Oct 2026

Barcelona

5900 € (Per Person)

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Course Introduction / Overview:

The air traffic control environment is one of the most demanding and high-stakes operational settings in the world, where leadership is not just a managerial function but a critical component of safety and efficiency. This course is meticulously designed to transform experienced air traffic controllers and supervisors into exceptional leaders capable of navigating the complexities of modern air traffic management. Moving beyond standard supervisory training, this program delves into the specific challenges of the ATC workplace, from managing team dynamics under pressure to championing a robust safety culture. Drawing on principles from leading thinkers in safety science like Erik Hollnagel, the course emphasizes resilience and proactive safety management over reactive compliance. Participants will explore concepts discussed in seminal works such as "The Field Guide to Understanding 'Human Error'" by Sidney Dekker, learning to see human performance as a solution to harness rather than a problem to control. BIG BEN Training Center has developed this curriculum to provide a unique blend of theoretical knowledge and practical, scenario-based learning, ensuring that graduates can immediately apply advanced leadership, communication, and crisis management skills to enhance operational excellence and safety within their teams and organizations.

Target Audience / This training course is suitable for:

- Air Traffic Control Supervisors and Team Leaders.
- Senior Air Traffic Controllers aspiring to leadership roles.
- ATC Operations Managers and Duty Managers.
- ATC Training and Development Managers.
- Safety and Quality Managers in Air Navigation Services.
- Aviation Authority personnel involved in ATC oversight.
- Military Air Traffic Control leadership personnel.

Target Sectors and Industries:

- Civil Aviation Authorities.
- Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs).
- International and Regional Airports.
- Military Aviation and Air Defense sectors.
- Governmental bodies and regulatory agencies responsible for aviation oversight.
- Private companies operating control towers or providing ATC services.

Target Organizations Departments:

- Air Traffic Services and Operations.
- Safety Management and Quality Assurance.
- Training and Personnel Development.
- Human Resources and Performance Management.
- Regulatory Compliance and Auditing.
- Aerodrome and Approach Control Units.
- En-route and Area Control Centers.

Course Offerings:

By the end of this course, the participants will have able to:

- Apply core leadership and management theories tailored to the ATC environment.
- Develop and implement effective communication strategies to enhance team cohesion and clarity.
- Build and lead high-performance teams capable of operating under extreme pressure.
- Master conflict resolution techniques for maintaining a positive and productive work environment.
- Champion and integrate a robust Safety Management System (SMS) and a just culture.
- Analyze and mitigate human factors to improve controller performance and reduce risk.
- Conduct effective performance evaluations and provide constructive coaching and mentoring.
- Lead with confidence and decisiveness during emergencies and crisis situations.
- Manage operational change effectively, including the integration of new technologies.
- Develop personal action plans for continuous leadership development in air traffic management.

Course Methodology:

The training methodology for this course at BIG BEN Training Center is designed to be highly interactive, immersive, and directly applicable to the realities of the air traffic control environment. We move beyond traditional lecture-based formats to create a dynamic learning experience that fosters critical thinking and practical skill development. A significant portion of the course is dedicated to case studies of real-world ATC incidents and successes, allowing participants to analyze complex situations and leadership decisions in a controlled setting. Facilitated group discussions and collaborative problem-solving exercises encourage the sharing of experiences and perspectives among peers. Role-playing scenarios and simulations are used extensively to practice key skills such as conflict resolution, performance feedback, and crisis communication. Participants will receive personalized feedback from experienced instructors who are experts in aviation leadership and human factors. The program emphasizes self-reflection and the development of a personal leadership philosophy, ensuring that the learning is not only retained but also integrated into the participant's daily supervisory practice. This hands-on, participant-centered approach ensures a deep and lasting understanding of advanced ATC leadership principles.

Course Agenda (Course Units):

Unit One: Foundations of ATC Leadership and Supervision

- The unique role of the leader in the ATC environment.
- Transitioning from controller to supervisor.
- Core principles of leadership versus management.
- Applying situational leadership models in operational settings.
- Ethical decision-making and professional accountability.
- Understanding the regulatory framework for ATC supervision.
- Developing your personal leadership philosophy and style.

Unit Two: Communication and High-Performance Team Building

- Advanced communication techniques for clarity and precision.
- Active listening and providing constructive feedback.
- Strategies for conflict resolution and mediation within teams.
- Building trust and psychological safety in the control room.
- Motivating and engaging a diverse team of controllers.
- Coaching and mentoring for skill development and career progression.
- Fostering effective collaboration between shifts and adjacent sectors.

Unit Three: Safety Management, Human Factors, and Just Culture

- Fundamentals of Safety Management Systems (SMS) in ATC.
- Understanding human performance, limitations, and error.
- Implementing effective Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS).
- The principles and application of a just culture.
- Conducting preliminary analysis of operational incidents.
- Proactive safety measures and risk assessment techniques.
- Personal stress management and building team resilience.

Unit Four: Performance Management and Operational Efficiency

- Setting clear performance standards and operational objectives.
- Conducting effective performance appraisals and reviews.
- Managing underperformance and difficult conversations.
- Utilizing operational data and metrics for improvement.
- Principles of effective rostering and workforce planning.
- Leading teams through technological and procedural changes.
- Implementing continuous improvement processes in ATC operations.

Unit Five: Advanced Supervisory Skills and Crisis Leadership

- Advanced decision-making models for high-pressure situations.
- Leading effectively during system outages, emergencies, and unusual events.
- Fundamentals of media interaction and external stakeholder communication.
- Navigating the leadership challenges of NextGen and future ATC systems.
- Succession planning and developing the next generation of ATC leaders.
- Course review and creation of a personal leadership action plan.
- Final integrated leadership simulation exercise.

FAQ:

Qualifications required for registering to this course?

There are no requirements.

How long is each daily session, and what is the total number of training hours for the course?

This training course spans five days, with daily sessions ranging between 4 to 5 hours, including breaks and interactive activities, bringing the total duration to 20 - 25 training hours.

Something to think about:

How can ATC leaders balance the stringent demands of regulatory compliance with the need to foster a 'just culture' where controllers feel safe to report errors without fear of punitive action?

What unique qualities does this course offer compared to other courses?

This course distinguishes itself by moving beyond generic leadership training and immersing participants in a curriculum specifically engineered for the high-consequence world of air traffic control. Unlike other programs that may offer a one-size-fits-all approach, our content is deeply rooted in the operational realities, psychological pressures, and unique safety culture of the ATC profession. We integrate advanced concepts from safety science and High-Reliability Organizing (HRO), teaching leaders not just to manage, but to build resilient systems and teams that can anticipate and adapt to unforeseen challenges. The curriculum places a heavy emphasis on the practical application of human factors knowledge, enabling supervisors to proactively manage controller performance, fatigue, and stress. Furthermore, the course is built around interactive, scenario-based learning, using realistic ATC case studies and simulations rather than abstract business examples. This ensures that participants practice and refine their skills in a context that is directly relevant to their work, empowering them to return to their units with the confidence and competence to lead effectively and enhance the safety and efficiency of the airspace they manage.