

ALUMNI STORY

Oxford Programme on Negotiation



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Negotiating space

Learning from Oxford Saïd's programmes is playing a role in shaping the future of the skies.

Just before Christmas in 2018, the journeys of 140,000 national and international passengers were disrupted as around 1,000 flights from the busy airport of London Gatwick were delayed or cancelled. The reason? Numerous sightings of drones near the runway that no one was able to identify or stop.

Gatwick's Chief Operating Officer Chris Woodrooffe said at the time: 'I think what's clear from the last 24 hours is that drones are a UK aviation issue, or even an international aviation issue. We have had the police, we have had the military seeking to bring this drone down for the last 24 hours and to date that has not been successful.'

The need to manage the skies

Amazon is planning to use unmanned drones to deliver packages, while Uber Lift suggests that 'flying cars' based on vertical take-off and landing technology could be a reality within the next few years. Major manufacturers are trailing the return of supersonic aircraft, and certain billionaires are keen to involve themselves in space travel.

'The skies are getting crowded,' agrees Howard Reitz, a director of strategy at

Raytheon, the US technology company. 'There are new types of aircraft, including small drones, supersonic aircraft and space craft, and the regulators are challenged to keep up. Also there is the continued challenge of cyber security.'

Exciting as all this may sound, one of the biggest challenges with innovation is the way that private tech companies tend to work on the principle of its being better to seek forgiveness than ask permission. Not only Gatwick Airport but the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the USA, and similar bodies elsewhere, need to get proactive about managing airspace.

Negotiation and corporate diplomacy

As a major technology provider to the FAA, Raytheon is in the middle of helping the regulators address these challenges in the USA, and Reitz as a business strategist at the company has found himself drawing on the course work of programmes run by Saïd Business School, specifically the Oxford Programme on Negotiation and the Diploma in Global Business.

'The work I did on negotiation with Tim Cullen and on corporate diplomacy with Mari Sako has helped me to frame this and work internally with our business leaders to develop ways to address the challenges for our customers,' he says.

He is using applications that he first learned at Oxford, including 'the ability

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to shape the strategic playing field with the government in corporate diplomacy and strategies for successful multi-party bargaining in negotiation to help craft an approach to working with our customers’.

Shaping the challenge

In order to adapt to the new entrants in the airspace, the major regulators will have to adopt new technologies to manage traffic congestion and ensure the safety and resilience of the system. Reitz is working internally with the team at Raytheon to help their customers in the USA to shape future systems for managing the airspace.

‘The technology is moving fast, while regulation necessarily moves slowly,’ says Reitz. ‘This is an area that requires safety and efficacy, so it is vital that everyone works together, proactively, to develop a plan.’

‘We realised that in order to drive system-wide changes we need to build a new technological solution and work with existing market participants and new technology companies. In order to sell this solution we need to understand our customers and their influencers. We held a series of workshops with the leadership team and consultants to “white board” the current state of play and create influence maps in order to build an integrated strategic plan.’

Identifying the influencers

The process – modelled in both the Oxford Programme on Negotiation and the corporate diplomacy course – of laying out the current state of play and understanding all of the existing positions of the constituents and their influences has helped Raytheon to build its strategy.

Constituents included the current administration and the system administrators but key to them were certain change agents in the US Congress. In addition they had to model the influences which included the trade associations and the unions. ‘Their interests are very human,’ Reitz says. ‘They care about people, jobs, and wages, and are deeply aware of safety issues.’

He is working through the current state of play to craft positions that will bring together a coalition to sell a new solution. This will adapt to new entrants in the airspace and address concerns about ensuring the safety and efficacy of the system.

Looking to the future

Although plans have not yet reached fruition, Reitz is confident that the approach will yield dividends. ‘We are looking at a fundamental change to everything we know about air travel, not only for customers but for all the stakeholders involved. We need to shape what it will look like at the highest level. The approaches that I learnt at Oxford are allowing me to be much more sophisticated in these discussions, leveraging all the different constituents to achieve major objectives in both the home realm and the international realm.’

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