MISSION POSSIBLE - AVIATION CAREER WITHOUT EXPERIENCE

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Many people believe that to work in aviation you must go through years of schooling and training. While some career paths in this industry require a lot of prior knowledge, others do not and anyone with enough passion and dedication can enter the industry with no prior experience.

First steps in the industry without experience

According to Kjell Mathisen, Corporate Training Manager at Aviator Airport Alliance, a full-range provider of aviation services at 15 airports across the Nordics, the ground handling industry has plenty of opportunities for people, eager to start their career in aviation. "Flexibility, stress management skills and the ability to understand that safety comes first are the key personal qualities for someone looking to enter this fascinating industry," he shares. "There are a lot of different positions that do not require prior experience or knowledge, for example, Ramp Agents and Passenger Services Agents to name a couple."

Fittingly to the name, ramp agents work on the ramp. "Their main tasks are loading and unloading baggage. They also prepare for aircraft arrival and departure, drive baggage tugs, belt loaders,

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and stairs," Kjell explains. "Passenger Service agents, on the other hand, work in check-in, gate or arrival service. Their main tasks are check-in of passengers, including document control, also boarding and deboarding of passengers."

Basic knowledge in just 3 weeks

The Corporate Training Manager shares that generally training takes around 3 weeks, with time for practical training varying in accordance to shift schedule. "After a month or two of training, new ramp agents can drive ground support equipment (GSE), some of which are heavy and complex. If needed at the station, agents will get push-back training after 6 months in service. Then they may drive a P/B Tug of 60 tons, pushing an aircraft of 200 tons from a stand," he shares. "Once trained passenger service agents acquire a different kind of skillset. They are trained to understand and deal with regulations of several airlines, even up to 15-20. They also are trained to manage large groups of travellers, both in check-in, boarding, and deboarding areas."

Preparations begin early

To make sure that the company does not run into staffing problems, the preparations for the summer season start early. "Summer is always the most active season for aviation in Europe due to increased traffic and number of passengers. For that, we have been getting ready since the end of 2021," explains Christine Berg Wikstrand, HR Manager at Aviator Sweden. "In that time, we have already added somewhere between 250-300 people to the team. This is a huge number when compared to the previous year when we only added around 50," she shares. "We mostly needed additional check-in and gate agents and loaders."

Christine shares that a number of new team members have joined Aviator without prior experience in aviation. "It is a great way to enter the industry and open new career opportunities. You just have to be dedicated to learning the needed skills to be successful in this industry."

Kjell Mathisen agrees with this though, explaining that over the years he has witnessed many incredible success stories. "It is always incredible to look back and see that people who began working in our company as, for example, ramp agents, without any upfront experience, are now in managerial positions, leading teams, managing stations. For me, it is proof that with enough drive and perseverance one can build a successful career in aviation without prior knowledge or experience."

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