



LOOKING BACK AT RESULT-ORIENTED CARIBBEAN AVIATION MEETUP

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Caribbean Aviation Meetup is just some days behind us. An amazing opportunity to discover the region, opportunities for business development.

First of all, I must tell that this event is very different, it is resulted-oriented. I guess I never had the chance to participate in such passionate debat regarding many aviation topics. It's not just presentations, it is a great "fight" for every matter that touches industry professionals. What to do, how to do better, what is an urgent matter. Opening of the event by Honorable Stuart Johnson, minister of tourism, economic affairs, transport and telecommunication who raised the leading role of St. Maarten in Caribbean aviation , the opportunity to rewrite its aviation policy.



There will be a series of articles regarding this event, as there were so many interesting meetings that we have to tell you about that in details. But first - I had a quick look back on the event with the Guru, Cdr. Bud Slabbaert, the Chairman of the Caribbean Aviation Meetup.

Q. Event if events is just some days behind, what is your personal impression, was the 4th one different comparing to previous? Why?

A. I have noticed an increase in engagement and interaction of the participants in the sessions. The Meetup is a communication platform not a lecture-and-listen event. It is important that we find results and solutions through an exchange of information, experiences and expertise. The format of the conference is different than others. Some even call it an un-conference. It is liked and many of the professionals have become repeat visitors of the event. Sponsors recognize the value of the conference which resulted in a sharply increased number of sponsors this year.



Q. You already announced dates for the 5th one, will it be hosted in Saint-Marten as well, what changes, surprises, new things do you plan?

A. The date of the next year's 5th annual Caribbean Aviation Meetup is June 16-18 and it will most likely be held in St.Maarten/St.Martin again. I intend to have a debriefing session with the stakeholders on the island first before making it official, yet, I'm positive about it.

A surprise, would not be a surprise anymore if I tell you. This year participants were surprised by having one day of sessions in a hangar of Grand Case airport with a free view of the ramp and its activities, while we sent a small group on a chartered plane to St.Barth for an exclusive mini-summit. And then there was a panel session about Africa which I initiated because I believe that the continent could be developed in a tourism source market and a partner for trade and cultural exchange.

Next year we will have similar surprises that will make Caribavia stand out from any other conference. I'm considering to create an aviation week whereby the three day conference will remain the center piece. This year we had a debriefing at the end of the conference that was scheduled for 30 minutes. There was such an interesting exchange of facts and opinions that I extended the open debate to 90 minutes. Next year, we'll have the debate on the first day of the conference and call it "Hard Talk" or something like it. For one the audience wants it and there is definitely a need for professionals in the region to speak up without limitations. So, we'll open it up in the beginning.

Q. What people you are inviting to participate? Who should contact you and see what is possible to do together?

A. The conference is a catalyst for action and activity. It is not as much who I invite to join. I create the conference towards what I believe is needed in the region and what is desired by the industrial partners abroad in order to be able to reach out to the Caribbean. Caribavia is content driven and the subjects cover a wide range of issues and matters. Mind that our motto is airlift, which is denominator for both the aviation and the tourism industry. Airline passenger seats are filled with tourists, airports are part of a destination. You have to bring those stakeholders together for them

to understand each other better and explore ways for cooperation, and last but not least recognize new opportunities. Thus, putting a program together is not a matter of inviting speakers and presentations at random, but rather determining a purpose for including a particular presentation.

I have an open ear and an open mind. I always say that it doesn't cost or hurt to open a dialog. Anyone who has a suggestion that will meet the interest and needs of the participants is welcome to bring it on.

For everyone interested - I strongly recommend to block some days in your agenda for Caribbean Aviation Meetup 2020!



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