Choosing an SMS Provider

Considerations for US Part 135 Operators, 145 MROs and 91.147 LOA Holders

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OmniSMS®
Aviation Management System

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Foreword

The 14 CFR Part 5 / SMS Voluntary Program (SMSVP) standard is one of the highest SMS standards in the world, well beyond those set forth in ICAO Doc. 9859 and the IS-BAO. These high standards are revealed in the data collection tools (DCTs) FAA uses for SMS design validation and performance demonstration phases of SMS acceptance. DCTs examine seven safety attributes which must be incorporated into an applicant's SMS processes. US Part 135 / 145 certificated operators and 91.147 LOA holders therefore face unique challenges when conforming to the new Part 5 / SMSVP standard and seeking FAA acceptance.

14 CFR Part 5 was updated in May of 2024 with new hazard notification and recordkeeping requirements, and compliance deadlines are approaching:

- May 28, 2025 for part 121 air carriers to meet revised part 5 requirements;
- December 31, 2025 for part 145 MROs seeking initial approval or renewal of EASA Part-145 certification;
- May 28, 2027 for part 135 operators, 91.147 LOA holders, and certain production / type certificate holders to have their part 5-conforming SMS accepted.

Part 135 operators and 91.147 LOA holders who do not have a Part 5-conforming SMS must provide their CMT with a schedule of events (SoE) to ensure availability of FAA resources, and a completed declaration of compliance (DoC) to assure Part 5 compliance.

Part 145 MROs are probably next in line for an SMS mandate. In the meantime, FAA's SMS Voluntary Program is available for those who want to get started now.

Choosing the Part 5 / SMSVP standard should therefore be an easy decision for any US certificated organization who is considering implementing SMS, or who recognizes that their present system does not meet FAA requirements.

This informative guide is written specifically for such organizations. It assumes the following decisions have been made:

- To implement an SMS that conforms to the Part 5 / SMSVP standard;
- To contract with an SMS software vendor or service provider.

SMS service providers come in all shapes and sizes. Some provide documentation, such as an SMS Manual and/or Emergency Response Plan. Some provide software alone; others offer SMS training of different types. Many providers offer systems that include documentation, software, training, and support additional programs such as VDRP, ASAP, Fatigue Risk Management, FOQA, CASS, and ASIAS participation among others.

Some SMS vendors focus on a specific industry segment, while others are more generic. Most solutions have similar features, but selecting the right one often comes down to one primary requirement: *Which system will best meet the unique needs of your organization and give you the tools you need to deliver safety excellence?*

The considerations discussed herein should help you build a list of requirements for your SMS, and hopefully make your comparative analysis easier. Don't be afraid to ask vendors for proof of concept demonstrations and be willing to ask tough questions. These steps will help you mitigate the risk of a bad investment, achieve active conformance status with FAA's SMS requirements, and ensure the future safety and success of your aviation enterprise.

Sincerely,

Paul Salerno

Paul Salerno, Accountable Executive
Omni Air Group, Inc.

How to Choose an SMS Provider

1. BEST PRACTICES

A. MORE THAN SOFTWARE

This paper explores considerations when selecting an SMS vendor. Software selection is certainly important, since SMS is a data-driven approach to safety management. But beyond software are numerous other things to consider, starting with some generic best practices:

- **Know what you're looking for.** As a commercial operator, your goal should be to achieve conformance with FAA standards before SMS becomes mandated. Determine how your prospective SMS provider will help you achieve that goal while meeting other objectives (such as supporting OH&S requirements, CASS, supporting more than one certificate, or obtaining a future ISO 9000 or an AS9100 quality certification).
- **Stay ahead of your CMT.** Your Certificate Management Team (CMT) may also be new to SMS. As with any new program, you're much better off showing principal inspectors *how you do it*, rather than being behind the curve and listening to them tell you how they think SMS processes should be performed.
- **Do your research.** Identify top vendors in the market and study their various technologies and offerings. Doing your homework means you can speak to vendors with more authority and expertise.
- **Keep your shortlist short.** Involving more than three or four vendors can push out your timeline unnecessarily. Limit your shortlist, conduct research and evaluate information from the vendor's existing clients, the experiences of your industry peers, and some hands-on system use. Also consider the overall fit and customer service, since a good vendor relationship goes a long way.

B. MODULES, FEATURES AND PRICING

Features and pricing are important considerations. Consider price, but avoid comparing 'apples to oranges' as vendors' suites of products and services can vary greatly.

- **Modules and their impact.** Some SMS vendors package their products and features into 'modules'. This makes it difficult to determine which modules you will need in the future (and what that future price will be). It also makes comparisons more difficult.
- **Flashy features.** Don't let vendors sidetrack you with flashy features you won't use - keep your evaluation focused on your needs. Rather than creating an extensive feature list, focus on finding solutions that will meet your needs and help you differentiate vendors. Identify your needs and your challenges, and let vendors explain how their products, services and support can solve them.
- **Limit price increases.** Once you have invested yourself in a vendor's SMS solution, it's a rude awakening to be presented with a significant price increase. Make sure there are no surprises by getting the vendor to guarantee (in writing) that price increases will be limited to an amount or percentage that is agreed upon.

2. EVALUATING AN SMS VENDOR'S OFFERINGS

A. SOFTWARE OR SYSTEM?

First nail down exactly what your prospective SMS vendor is offering. This could be just software, or it might be a *system* of various SMS programs, components, elements and training designed to work together.

- **Is the provider offering software only?** If so, much work will be required to develop an FAA-accepted SMS Manual that goes well beyond statements of policy to include **Safety Attributes** for performing various SMS processes in the software.

Note:
Some SMS software providers 'partner' with other companies to provide manuals and training. This can result in an SMS Manual that will not satisfy FAA requirements.

- **Are other system components included in addition to software** (such as documentation and training)? These elements should be congruent and harmonized.
- **Safety Attributes** (further discussed in Paragraph 3(D) of this paper) must also include interfaces between SMS processes, and documentation must of course **interface** properly with the software. This means **procedures** for performing FAA-defined SMS processes should be provided in the documentation.

Note:
Safety attributes are not required by regulation. However, the design validation / demonstration data collection tools (DCTs) that your CMT and the SMS Program Office use to evaluate your SMS will examine safety attributes, and your system must include these attributes to be accepted.

B. DOCUMENTATION

Documentation needed for your SMS includes (at a minimum) an SMS Manual and Emergency Response Plan.

- **If documentation is offered, read it**. This is one of the best ways to evaluate the quality and professionalism of the SMS vendor's offerings. Does the written guidance include references to 14 CFR Part 5? This will greatly simplify and speed completion of your **Declaration of Compliance**.
- **Is the documentation periodically revised?**
- **If ASAP is offered, an ASAP Policy and Procedures Manual is recommended.** This document will include guidance on how to perform Event Review Committee (ERC) processes in the software.
- **Study the User Guide** when evaluating software. Look for congruency and clear, concise instructions.

C. INTERNAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

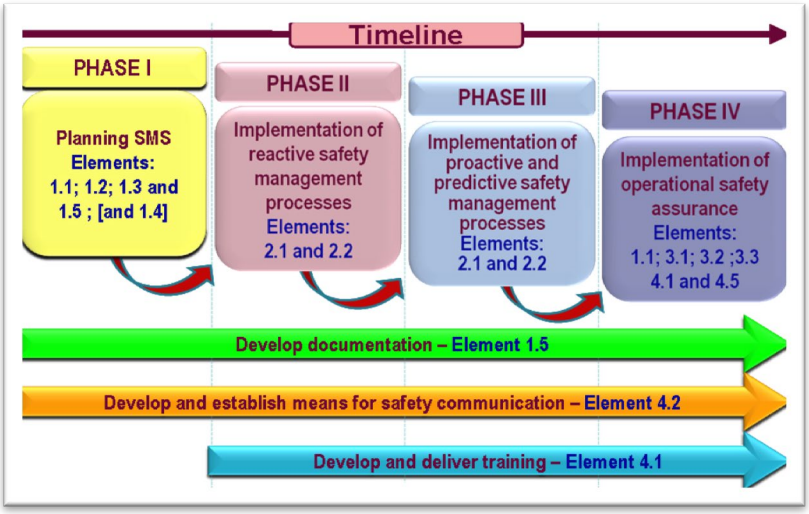
Some vendor SMS Manual templates contain Safety Assurance language that talks about internal audits. Others provide a separate Internal Evaluation Program (aka Quality Assurance Manual) with auditor selection and training criteria, IEP scope and schedule, and policies / procedures for how audits are performed in the software.

- **Audit checklists do not comprise an IEP!** Some vendors provide audit checklists as editable WORD and/or PDF documents. Others build their audit checklists into the web application, for easier editing.
- **Look for Safety Attributes** to address DCT questions and the Part 5 / SMSVP standard.

D. SMS TRAINING

When aviation safety management systems were in their infancy, operators needed training in SMS design theory and development. Implementation was planned in four phases, each with the necessary documentation and training. It was expected to take up to 3 years to implement a functioning SMS.

Today, operators are able to select from fully developed solutions that address all four phases of SMS implementation. And while some theory is still needed, such systems require training on how to *configure and operate* the SMS, as opposed to SMS development.



- **Does the provider include SMS training?** SMS training should address all four phases of SMS development. Be sure the courses you select provide training on the *practical application of SMS processes,* rather than on how to develop them. You will need at a minimum:
  - Software / system training for department managers and your Director of Safety;
  - Initial and recurrent SMS training for front-line personnel, managers and the accountable executive.
- **If training is offered, sample the training.** Is it of professional quality? Will it be well-received by managers and front-line workers? Computer-based training has its limitations, but is by far the most efficient and cost-effective way to meet this requirement.
- **Is the SMS training harmonized** with the system's documentation and software? In other words, are the same terms, definitions, and methods used throughout the system?

3. FAA'S SMS VOLUNTARY PROGRAM

A complete understanding of FAA's SMS Voluntary Program is beyond the scope of this paper. Please visit FAA's **Safety Management System** web page for more information.

A. CONFORMING TO THE PART 5 / SMSVP STANDARD

Most SMS software providers will state their system meets FAA's Part 5 / SMSVP standard, but details are important here. Comparing an SMS vendor's solution to Part 5 and the SMSVP standard (which are identical), the contents of AC 120-92B and FAA's **Compliance Statement Job Aid** is not enough.

- **The *acid test* of SMSVP conformance** can only be performed through the use of FAA's SMS **Data Collection Tools** (DCTs).
- Confirm Part 5 / SMSVP conformance with other operators who are using the software. **Did the other operators develop their own written guidance, or were they able to utilize the software vendor's SMS Manual template?**

B. SMSVP COMPLIANCE STATEMENT JOB AID

FAA's Compliance Statement Job Aid lists all SMS processes and regulatory requirements as set forth in the Part 5 / SMSVP standard. This Excel worksheet asks for references in your SMS Manual / ERP / software as to where each specific regulatory requirement (SRR) is addressed. Operators must complete the compliance statement and submit it to their local CMT to become an SMSVP active applicant and prepare for the **documentation validation phase**.

- Has the SMS vendor verified their system's Part 5 / SMSVP conformance using FAA's compliance statement / tracker tool?
- Does the vendor have any clients who have done this using their system?
- Ask for references.

C. DESIGN VALIDATION DCTS

These DCTs ask more in-depth questions regarding the design of your SMS (by looking at documentation; NOT software). DCT questions verify that processes exist and procedures have been established for (among other things) the performance of Safety Risk Management (SRM) and Safety Assurance (SA) processes.

- Does the SMS vendor provide such documentation? *If the vendor does not, you will need to develop (or outsource) an SMS Manual, which should interface properly with the software.*
- Does the vendor's documentation include procedures for the performance of SRM and SA processes in the vendor's software? *If the vendor provides only software, you will need to develop these processes / procedures, and align them with the software.*

Don't settle for 'yes' answers; ask the prospective vendor to see their written procedures (not simply policies) including procedures for these FAA-defined SMS processes:

- System analysis and hazard identification (§ 5.53)
- Safety risk assessment and control (§ 5.55)
- Analysis of data (§ 5.71(b))
- Safety performance assessment (§ 5.73)

D. MORE ABOUT SAFETY ATTRIBUTES

It is possible for an SMS vendor to provide a properly functioning safety management system with missing Safety Attributes (typical of systems designed to meet the ISBAO standard). But this oversight will manifest itself in numerous revisions; first while performing self-assessments, and later as FAA applies their Data Collection Tools (DCTs) to determine conformance with the Part 5 / SMSVP standard.

Safety Attributes are critical to achieving Part 5 compliance / SMSVP active conformance status. There are seven attributes which must be built into your written guidance. They are listed in Table 10-1-1A, Safety Attributes as described in **Order 8900.1 Volume 10, Chapter 1, Section 1**.

When your CMT and the SMS Program Office inspectors come to perform SMSVP **Design Validation or Design Demonstration evaluations**, remember that every Data Collection Tool (DCT) question that FAA uses to evaluate your SMS is based on one of the seven Safety Attributes.

- You want to be able to answer every DCT question positively and with confidence.
- Ask your prospective SMS service provider the following questions:
  - Are FAA's 7 Safety Attributes built into your written guidance and software?
  - Please show us an example of an interface in your written guidance.
  - Please show us some procedures for SRM and/or SA processes in the documentation and software.
  - Please show us some controls in your documentation and demonstrate a few controls in your software.
  - Please show us how SMS processes are measured in your system.
  - Please show us how operational processes are measured.

E. PROCESSES AND WHY THEY'RE IMPORTANT

Process measurement is a Safety Attribute that comes up frequently in DCT questions during FAA evaluations – and it applies not just to evaluations of SMS processes, but **operational processes** as well – in flight ops., maintenance, cabin ops., line / ramp services, etc.

- An SMS vendor's prospective system should permit you to define your own operational processes, and map them to departments (department managers are typically process owners).
- The system should be able to collect data on, and measure the performance of, both SMS processes and operational processes throughout the entire scope of your aviation operations.
- Clearly defined processes are a fundamental requirement of any ISO 9000 quality certification; but with or without an ISO 9000 certification (or AS9100D for Mx organizations), you still want to be able to share the results of any quality audit with your SMS; data such as contributing and causal factors, and risk controls / corrective actions which affect both safety and the quality of process outputs.
- Looking forward, do you want your SMS to support process-based quality management? Ask your prospective SMS vendor the following questions:
  - In your system, how do we define our organization's unique operational processes?

- Can we audit a single process within a department?
- Can we audit the same process across more than one department?
- Can audit findings and root causes be viewed by process?
- In your system, can a process-level view of risk controls be seen?

4. ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS / SMS DESIGN FEATURES

Certificated operators need the right SMS tools – to manage safety, protect people and assets, and foster a positive relationship with FAA inspectors on their Certificate Management Team (CMT).

Some of the following programs and features are not required by Part 5 / SMSVP standards. They are however useful tools which can provide value. If you want to incorporate these tools into your SMS (either now or later), read on:

A. VDRP

FAA's Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Program (VDRP) provides for the voluntary reporting of apparent violations, and can protect the company from enforcement action. As a certificated organization, if you aren't using self-disclosures, you should be!

Disclosures can help you avoid civil penalties, provide opportunities to improve systems, and even improve your relationship with your CMT. They are particularly valuable when violations in maintenance occur. Unlike many flight operations and training records, recorded maintenance becomes a permanent part of aircraft records, and unless apparent violations are disclosed, they can remain 'skeletons in your closet' for years.

Self-disclosures may also serve to protect individual airmen, agents and other employees from potential legal action from FAA in the event of an inadvertent violation, including civil penalty actions and suspension of airmen certificates. Many will argue this point, but there is a 12-year old **legal precedent** to support this opinion. It requires an employee's inadvertent violation to be tied to a company deficiency, which is usually pretty easy to do (ask us how).

If you want this essential tool included in your SMS, ask your prospective SMS vendor:

- Do VDRP policies and procedures exist in your written guidance?
- Can hazard reports in the SMS be linked to external disclosures?

B. ASRS

FAA's Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) is administered by NASA to receive and analyze reports submitted under the program. Almost everyone is familiar with ASRS reporting and the protection from FAA certificate action it affords. However, protection under this program is limited for repeated disclosures by the same individual within the last 5 years.

To encourage employees to report into your SMS, the system should make it easy for an ASRS report to be submitted simultaneously with an employee's hazard report. If you want to integrate ASRS into your SMS, ask your prospective SMS provider:

- Can employees submit an ASRS report from within your hazard reporting portal?
- Can the employee attach their de-identified ASRS report to their hazard report?

C. ASAP

FAA's **Aviation Safety Action Program** (ASAP) encourages employees to voluntarily report safety issues even though they may involve a potential violation of regulations. To do this, enforcement incentives are offered to covered employees under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the participating company and FAA. An Event Review Committee (ERC) must be established by the company, with at least one member of the ERC being an FAA representative. ASAP reports are reviewed, investigated, and resolved by the Event Review Committee.

Many SMS service providers include ASAP in their offerings – but all are not the same. Consider the following if you want an ASAP program in your SMS:

- **Third-party facilitator required**. Some ASAP programs require employees to report twice – once into your SMS, and again into a separate reporting system (WBAT). You must then pay for a third-party facilitator to manage your ERC meetings and often work around their schedule. Under this type of program, you are listed in the facilitator's MOU with FAA.
- **No facilitator required.** This type of "in-house" ASAP program lets you generate your own MOU using FAA's **Automated MOU Generator** and enter into the MOU directly with your CMT. This solution does NOT require redundant reporting, since all ASAP reports come into your SMS database, and are managed there. This type of ASAP requires Event Review Committee (ERC) processes to be built you're your software. Your SMS vendor may also offer an option for ERC meeting facilitation. **Most operators are surprised to discover how easy it is to sign the MOU and establish their in-house ASAP program.**
- Ask your prospective SMS vendor:
  - For an ASAP report, can employees report only once into your system, or do they need to go into another system to report again?
  - If redundant reporting is necessary, can data be shared between the systems?
  - Is a 3rd-party facilitator required?
  - Is there any additional cost?
  - Please show us ASAP reporting and ERC report-management policies and procedures.

D. ASIAS

FAA's Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing (ASIAS) system connects 185 data and information sources, including national databases of ASAP and FDM / FOQA data. The system is managed by MITRE under contract with FAA. Participation in ASIAS lets operators share their de-identified safety data with ASIAS, and search an extensive warehouse of nationwide safety data through the ASIAS portal by aircraft model, airport, type of event, etc.

This invaluable source of safety data help operators identify hazards to safe operations, create hazard awareness communications, and provide lessons learned for training, etc.

SMS service providers offering ASIAS should be able to transmit the data to ASIAS with no effort on the part of the operator; just sign a simple agreement and "opt-in or opt-out" of data sharing.

E. BARRIERS AND CONTROLS

While hazard identification remains fundamental to SMS, a modern safety management system should also focus on identifying the barriers and controls that prevent such hazards or threats from being realized as aircraft accidents. This is what makes bow-tie analysis so effective. **Risk assessments are more accurate and less subjective when barriers and controls are considered in the analysis.**

Ask your prospective SMS service provider the following questions:

- Does your system allow us to identify risk controls we already have in place?
- Does the system support **ARMS Event Risk Classification**?
- Is it possible to include risk controls in proactive risk analysis and assessments?
- Does the system provide for proactive risk assessments that consider existing barriers and controls?
- How (and when) are risk controls periodically assessed for effectiveness?
- How do you handle a risk control that is determined to be ineffective?

F. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Some SMS providers interpret 'safety performance' to mean performance of the SMS. Such performance can be measured by the number of reports received from an employee group, no. of audits conducted on time, number of findings in a department, investigations completed, reports closed timely, etc.

Safety performance indicators go beyond SMS performance to measure unwanted events from various sources of data (e.g., reported events, investigation results and FOQA). Simply counting these events over time may work for certain types of events, but how can we measure the risk of unwanted events that rarely (if ever) occur? (Think CFIT, mid-air collision, loss of control, and runway excursion).

Well-designed performance indicators measure *precursors* to unwanted events against a metric or unit of measurement which is appropriate for the type of event being measured. For example, precursors to inflight system / component failures can be measured by maintenance errors on a per-flight-hour basis. Likewise, precursors to runway excursion (which include unstable approaches, long landings and high rate of descent on approach) are best measured by number of flights conducted. And the maintenance department may want to measure quality escapes by number of work orders or task cards completed as part of its CASS program. **Learn more about precursors**.

Ask your prospective SMS provider the following questions:

- Can your system measure safety performance using metrics other than calendar time?
- Can the system identify and group precursors to count against a performance indicator?
- Can performance objectives and alert thresholds be set?
- Does the system generate automated messages when an alert threshold is approached or reached?

G. SUPPORT FOR MAINTENANCE QA / CASS

A maintenance quality assurance system (aka Continuing Analysis and Surveillance System, or CASS) is required for 10-or-more Part 135 operators. But regardless of how many seats your aircraft have, Mx QA can benefit any organization that wants to continually improve their maintenance system.

If you want to make your maintenance system the best that it can be, your SMS should support these efforts - whether required by regulation or not. Ask your prospective SMS provider:

- Does your SMS database provide **operational performance data** for analysis (such as maintenance-related causes of delays, interruptions and cancellations)?
- Does the SMS provide **surveillance data** (such as audit findings of nonconformities and ineffective risk controls) within maintenance *processes* (not just the department)?
- Does the SMS generate **compliance data** for analysis and trending (including both procedural nonconformities and regulatory noncompliance) in maintenance department(s)?

- Does the SMS provide for trending and analysis of the **contributing and causal factors** of maintenance system failures (e.g., premature failures of life-limited components, installation errors, repair errors, and maintenance control failures such as overfly of an inspection or other time limit)?
- Does the SMS provide for capture of **event data** (such as high-load events, in-flight engine shutdowns, quality escapes, and other irregularities due to technical difficulties, together with ATA/JASC codes)?
- Does the SMS let you easily see **trends in Mx system events?** This should include, for example, related aircraft system malfunctions and chronic systems by:
  - Aircraft registration number;
  - Aircraft make / model;
  - ATA / JASC code.

H. REPORTS AND ANALYTICS

A well-designed SMS should produce meaningful reports and analytics. Easy access to this data will allow you to gain insight into where problems exist, and make your corrective actions more effective.

- **Embedded analytics.** Operational, safety and quality key performance indicators (KPIs) should permit drill-down into the events and contributing / causal factors that impacted each KPI. SMS performance indicators should also be filterable by date range and department, with drill-down capability. Audit summary reports (with findings and corrective actions) and quarterly ASAP reports should be provided. Data should be easily printed to PDF or paper for meetings / presentations / 3rd-party distribution, etc.
- **Data export.** Even the best QSMS designers cannot predict all the ways you might want to analyze your data. Data export functions are therefore essential. User-defined **data export templates** are helpful, since different departments and users want to see data filtered and sorted in different ways.
- **This is your data.** You should never have to ask your SMS vendor to export data for you – or rely on them to obtain your data should you decide to switch vendors.

I. BACKUPS AND RECORDKEEPING

System backups. Competent SaaS vendors back up their systems routinely as a best practice. This is important to assure you won't lose any of your data, as well as from a regulatory perspective.

- Ask your prospective SMS vendor:
  - How often is my data backed up, and how long is each data backup retained?
  - How often is your system backed up, and how long is each system backup retained?
  - Do backups reside at a separate location from the primary data center?

Recordkeeping requirements. The Part 5 / SMSVP standard contains specific recordkeeping requirements.

- SRM records must be retained for "…as long as the control remains relevant…" to your operations (for most risk controls, this means for as long as you are operating).
- SA records (i.e., audits and their findings, performance assessments, management reviews, etc.) must be retained for a minimum of 5 years.
- Ask your prospective SMS vendor these tough questions:
  - What happens if you go out of business, or otherwise can no longer provide your SMS database service?
  - How do I meet these recordkeeping requirements?

Your SMS service provider should be able to offer a solution that does not rely on the provider's business continuity or continued functioning of their SMS web application / database.

J. ENTERING HISTORICAL DATA

For operators who are switching SMS providers or are transitioning from a paper / Excel spreadsheet-based SMS to an electronic database, the process of entering historical reports should be made easy. Ask your prospective SMS vendor:

- Do you have a process or method for bringing over our historical data?
- When entering reports from the past two or three years, will these reports show the actual event date and the date the report was previously submitted? The report date (in addition to the event date) may be important for trend analysis and KPIs, depending on how the system filters reports.
- Can you tell us what specific historical data is essential to the operation of your system, as we move forward? **Recommended historical data includes:**
  - Previous events / occurrences / delays / interruptions;
  - Previously reported findings / nonconformities;
  - Related root causes and processes;
  - Risk controls implemented to prevent recurrence;
  - Processes and departments within which controls were implemented.

5. EVALUATING YOUR SHORTLIST OF SMS VENDORS

Create a shortlist of vendors whose principals and staff have a **strong background in commercial aviation,** preferably with management experience. Your vendor should be an authority on the Part 5 / SMS Voluntary Program standard and its implementation. Your vendor should also be able to provide you with a list of client references who have successfully achieved Part 5 compliance or SMSVP active conformance, and the clients can share with you how things went, and how well the vendor supported them during the process.

As you evaluate your shortlist, keep the following additional considerations in mind:

A. MENTORING

Beyond learning how to use the software, mentoring will help you and your management team navigate the complexities of the Part 5 / SMSVP standard and learn how to effectively perform SMS processes. Mentoring will also help you decide if you want to employ some of the many optional programs available to certificate holders.

For example, do you want or need an ASAP program? What's involved with ERC meetings? Should a 3rd-party facilitator be used? How much time and other resources will it take to maintain the ASAP?

What about Flight Data Monitoring / FDAP / FOQA? What options are available, how is the data utilized, and how does this tie in with the ASIAS program? Will our pilot group be receptive?

Should we request entry into the SMSVP now, or wait? How does the process work, and how long will it take?

The right vendor can answer these and many more questions for you.

B. SUPPORT

SMS support means more than just a help desk for software issues. Look for a provider who knows how to help you best configure and scale your system, work through challenging reports, and periodically review your data entries to keep you on track.

Your SMS vendor should also be able to help you prepare for SMSVP Design Validation and Design Demonstration phases, when you're ready to take those steps.

C. CONTRACT AND TERMS

Can you cancel the vendor's service with 30 days' written notice? And is your data easily retrievable? If so, in what format(s)? Look for a vendor who does not tie you into a contract with annual renewals.

D. TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Software demonstrations alone won't let you adequately evaluate a vendor's SMS solution. Find vendors who will let you access their software / system for a period of time to better understand the user interface and system capabilities; only then will you be able to make an informed decision.

E. RELATIONSHIP

Look for rapport in your SMS vendor relationship. Honesty, accountability and effective communications are hallmarks of a company you want to do business with.

F. CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

Choose a vendor who listens; one who is receptive to feedback, and wants to continuously improve their products and services, as they help you improve yours. This partnership will serve you well as your safety culture develops and your operations achieve the highest levels of safety and quality.

6. CONCLUSION

In the near future, Part 135 and 145 commercial operators will be required to have a safety management system that meets FAA standards. Within the current Part 5 / SMSVP standard, safety management in operational departments is the responsibility of department managers – not the Director of Safety. Department managers are **operational process owners**, and ***Safety Ownership*** is one of seven Safety Attributes that will be assessed by your CMT using Design Validation and Design Demonstration Job Aids.

Remember:
Participation in the SMS Voluntary Program is not
required to implement an SMS that meets the standard!

Since new programs are always difficult to introduce into an organization, now is the time to start meeting the Part 5 / SMSVP standard. Assigning new duties and responsibilities to your people is a relatively straight-forward process, but asking them to perform their existing jobs differently, with a different attitude and perspective, makes SMS implementation particularly challenging.

By implementing or upgrading your SMS to the Part 5 / SMSVP standard now, your management team will have ample time to become competent in SMS processes, and your organization will be fully prepared when FAA's SMS mandate arrives.

7. ABOUT OMNI AIR GROUP

Omni Air Group is a leading developer and supplier of integrated Safety and Quality Management Systems for the aviation industry. Omni principal managers have more than 60 years of combined experience as owners, operators, and key managers of various aviation enterprises, including airline operations under Parts 135 and 121 of the Federal Aviation Regulations.

A. CONSULTING

Our team members have real world, hands-on experience with rapid growth, safety culture development, downsizing, acquisitions, certificate actions, incidents, and accidents. Omni offers virtually unlimited free telephone consulting advice at no charge to our subscription clients who desire this service.

B. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Omni Air Group provides technical support via telephone and email. We are a relatively small company, and pride ourselves on prompt response times and customer satisfaction. If we don't know the answer to your question, we'll find out, fast.

C. PRIVACY

Omni Air Group treats all customer information as highly confidential, in accordance with our formal Data Security Policy. We do not provide information to third parties. For privacy and data security policies, please visit us on the web at OmniSMS.aero.

For more information, please contact Omni Air Group:

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Omni Air Group's mission is to promote positive safety cultures by delivering the highest quality systems, services and training to our global aviation industry.