

<b>Entry Title:</b>	Taking Flight: CSeries Aircraft First Flight Event
<b>Organization:</b>	Bombardier Aerospace
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<b>Category:</b>	Division A – Events and Observances

## Overview

In 2008, the company launched the CSeries aircraft program, one of the most ambitious aerospace projects ever undertaken in Canada.

One of the program's major milestones – the CSeries maiden flight – was delayed on three occasions (Nov. 2012, June 2013, and July 2013) as the aircraft was not ready. These delays had a significant impact on the company's stock value and drew intense scrutiny from analysts, media, investors and customers. It raised doubts about Bombardier's ability to deliver on its promises and negatively impacted its image and reputation.

When Bombardier made history with the successful first flight of the CSeries aircraft on September 16, 2013 in Mirabel, Canada, our communications professionals decided to make a bold statement by holding a world-class event that was also broadcasted live on the web. This event was a first for the aerospace industry and had a profound impact on employee pride, in addition to confirming Bombardier as a leader in aerospace.

## Research

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Our research focussed on an analysis of the following elements:

- News headlines, stock market analyst reports, aviation blogs and discussions with our customers;
- Comments from internal blogs, employee meetings and engagement surveys;
- Stock price behaviour;
- Airbus A350 first flight event (June 2013); and
- Latest trends in social media and multimedia.

Detailed findings ([see Work Sample, p. 2-4](#)) helped us define how to raise the bar and produce a unique and innovative show, identify the tools we could leverage to broadcast the event and orient our strategy.

## Stakeholder Analysis

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### Employees

Bombardier Aerospace employs more than 37,000 individuals in 25 countries, many of whom are shareholders in the company. Given the importance of the program to the

company's future and given the level of investment (time, effort and money) going into the program, all employees were eager to witness this historic event. An analysis of employee questions and feedback collected on all our communication channels in 2012 and 2013 confirmed that the top two topics of interest for employees were: 1.sales and 2.progress on our new programs, especially in the CSeries aircraft family as a large number of employees had been working tirelessly on the program. There was a clear need to reassure them on the program's future, 'energize the troops' and celebrate the milestone.

### Investors

Given the level of investment required to develop a new aircraft, gaining an edge in the aerospace industry hinges, in part, on a company's ability to deliver new programs on-time. As a result, the investing public is very sensitive to any announcement made regarding new programs. The event was a unique opportunity to re-instill confidence in the company.

### Customers

Customers want nothing more than to receive confirmation that the aircraft they are considering, or have purchased, delivers on its performance targets. Furthermore, numerous discussions, focus groups and events highlighted the importance our customers gave to the performance and features of the aircraft. The live demonstration of the CSeries first flight was a golden opportunity to showcase exactly that, and to reassure our customers on our ability to deliver the aircraft.

### Analysts and Media

Given the importance of this milestone, interest from media and market analysts was very high. For months, the media relations team was inundated by calls from members of the print, television and radio media, along with market analysts, asking questions concerning the exact date of first flight. We realized that media outlets represented powerful partners in delivering our message and promoting this landmark event around the world.

### Aviation Enthusiasts and Employees' Families

These are people passionate by aviation and keenly interested in aviation news – many of them were closely following our social media campaign and commenting our Facebook page, as well as employees' families having a personal interest in the program.

## Goals and Objectives

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The ultimate goal of this campaign was to leverage this once-in-a-generation opportunity to 1. Enhance Bombardier's reputation, and 2. Increase stakeholder engagement toward Bombardier and the *CSeries* program, in order to contribute positively to *CSeries* sales.

Objectives	Stakeholders	Benchmark	Target
<b>Increase overall employee engagement</b>	Employees	Empl. Eng. score: 76% in 2012	77%
<b>Score for question 36</b> <i>I believe BA has an outstanding future<sup>1</sup></i>		80% score in 2012 to question 36	85%
<b>Increase interest in our product</b>	Customers	43 visits in 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter	70 visits
<b>Build trust</b>	Investors	\$5 peak in 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter	\$5.15
	Customers		
<b>Build trusting partnerships</b>	Suppliers <sup>2</sup>	N/A	N/A
<b>Positive tone in the media &amp; market analyst reports</b>	Media	0.71 – media index score after 1 <sup>st</sup> delay	0.85
<b>Increase the number of followers on our web and social media platforms</b>	Aviation enthusiasts, employees' families	2,000 new followers /month	4,000 new followers /month

## Planning and Strategy

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The planning of the maiden flight had to begin months in advance. Since the initial test flight was contingent on a number of technical factors, weather conditions, successful pre-flight tests and the confidence of the flight test team, etc., the exact date was completely unpredictable and kept changing right up to the last second. (*Work Sample, p. 5-18*)

### Creating a Positive Buzz Leading Up to the First Flight Event

Further to our research results, we decided to give the program's progress greater visibility by providing weekly video updates from the Vice President and General Manager of the *CSeries* program on social media and other web

<sup>1</sup> It is proven that this question is correlated to employee engagement (ref.:Hay Group)

<sup>2</sup> Suppliers are key players in the development of the *CSeries* aircraft program, and were invited to celebrate with us, but we only measured the impact through informal communication.

channels. An external website, the *CSeries Hub*, dedicated exclusively to the *CSeries*, was created to post a variety of information and content about the program. Also, a Twibbon<sup>3</sup> campaign was launched to encourage the various stakeholders to show their support for the program.

### A Unique, World-Class First Flight Event

To broadcast this world-class event, our professionals set up an innovative, fully bilingual television show presenting original content. It was hosted by a professional anchor invited for the occasion, along with the Vice President, Public Affairs, Communications and Corporate Social Responsibility, Bombardier Aerospace, and a professor from the École Polytechnique de Montréal. This content was broadcast live on [www.cseriesfirstflight.bombardier.com](http://www.cseriesfirstflight.bombardier.com) (you can watch the full high-definition replay here: <http://youtu.be/eXp7UY5Wj6k>)

During the webcast, which lasted over three hours, some of our key stakeholders and aerospace experts were invited on stage to share behind-the-scenes details about the *CSeries* aircraft program and various testimonials, all in an effort to convey the image of a company that is as innovative and ingenious as its products. Supported by a multimedia production company – BlueStorm Media – we set up an eye catching outdoor stage at our Mirabel site and celebrated with over 3,000 employees, customers, and suppliers. Employees were invited to live this historical moment on-site or to watch the webcast in designated rooms around the world.

### Joining Forces

With a mission to building trusting partnerships with all stakeholders, we involved many of them in organizing the event, including the communications team from Pratt & Whitney, the aircraft engine manufacturer. Also, some 120 *CSeries* employees provided logistical support during the event, and a number of employees from other departmental teams contributed to the success of the event, welcoming our customers, ensuring that the media had what they needed. Aviation enthusiasts and other “plane spotters”<sup>4</sup> were also invited to attend the event and take photos, so as to leverage their enthusiasm in sharing information on social media.

<sup>3</sup> A Twibbon Campaign is a dedicated microsite where users can support a cause, brand or organization on Facebook and Twitter in a variety of ways.

<sup>4</sup> Aviation enthusiasts taking photographs of our aircraft during the test phases along the fence line of our Mirabel facilities.

## Execution, Communication and Production

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We used a mix of online tools and traditional media to convey our key messages and promote the event. The primary communication tools used for the campaign both internally and externally were social media, including photos and videos posted on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, the *CSeries Hub*, blogs, and internal websites (*Work Sample, p. 19-46*), as well as press releases, emails, memos, newsletters, and the internal TV network. As for plant employees, information was conveyed to them mainly through their supervisors at daily meetings. The media received press releases and other advisories informing them of the upcoming event.

**2008-2013:** Regular communications and program updates online and traditional media. **Key message:** Change is in the air.

**February 2013:** Launch of the *CSeries Hub* ([cseries.com](http://cseries.com))

**March 2013:** Unveiling of the first *CSeries* Flight Test Vehicle ceremony

**June-Sept. 2013: Regular** Communications and program updates on online and traditional media. **Key message:** First flight is expected to occur in the coming weeks.

**Sept. 2013:** Build-up campaign leading to first flight on social media and Twibbon. **Key message:** Bombardier targets September 16 for first flight.

**September 16:** *CSeries* aircraft first flight event, live webcast and live coverage on social media. **Key message:** Change takes flight.

## Results and Evaluation

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The caliber and the flawless execution of the event impressed many, and on September 16, 2013, we set a new benchmark on how to cover a first flight.

### Results:

- Some 3,000 employees took part in the event in Mirabel, and thousands of others in the available 45 viewing rooms at our sites around the world.
- Over 40 international journalists attended the event in Mirabel.
- In the employee survey, for the question: “I believe Bombardier has an outstanding future”, which is one of the main drivers of employee engagement, we noted a 3% increase following the first flight (*Work Sample, p. 52*).
- The number of customer visits to our manufacturing facility increased, from 43 visits the previous quarter to 70

after the first flight, indicating a definite increased interest in our product (*Work Sample, p. 53*).

- The stock price increased by 0.37 % in the 2-month period following the event (*Work Sample, p. 54*).
- The media and market analysts’ reports changed tone regarding the *CSeries* aircraft, which was recognized as a serious contender to Airbus and Boeing in many respects. Our media index score reached 0.87, 2 points above our target (*Work Sample, p. 49*).
- The live webcast was viewed by more than 35,000 unique visitors worldwide (full three-hour replay: <http://youtu.be/eXp7UY5Wj6k>), and has been re-viewed 65,000 times since.
- The short six-minute recap video on YouTube ([http://youtu.be/BFT8\\_8gTSg](http://youtu.be/BFT8_8gTSg)) was viewed nearly 10,000 times; the take-off video (<http://youtu.be/byMILKJfFI>) had over 53,000 views and the landing video (<http://youtu.be/xNJ8jfb4Oac>) had over 30,000.
- Our social media campaign generated 118 million impressions, including blogs, digital press and other social media sites (*Work Sample, p. 91*). We reached a record increase of 6,000 followers per month on our web and social media platforms by the day of the first flight. We received a lot of positive feedback about the fact that we really took the time to engage with our audience (responding to inbound tweets and comments) rather than just publishing content (outbound).

We received hundreds of congratulatory emails and phone calls from all over the world. Industry players applauded the quality of our webcast and the professionalism shown during the first flight: competitors, Transport Canada, the FAA, industry associations such as the AIA in the United States and ATAG in Europe. Many remarked on the fact that we had clearly topped the Airbus 350 event, which is an outstanding achievement for a smaller company with far less means.