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## Understanding the Threshold

Your PBS Committee regularly receives the following questions from pilots:

- “I asked for three specific trips that would have brought me into the LCW. Why did PBS force a fourth trip on my line?”
- “I asked for four trips that would have fit into the LCW. Why was I only awarded three of them?”

In each of these all too common situations, the cause of these undesirable awards is the threshold setting.

The threshold is the “trigger” that the Company uses to make your bid stop when it has reached a point within the LCW that will achieve an actual average line value in your category to be within one hour of the published ALV. PBS will stop processing your bid preferences within a pairings group when it awards enough pairings to be at or above the threshold. In most cases, the PBS Administrator must make multiple runs to find a threshold that works for a category and this is the reason the threshold is not known ahead of time.

Once line awards are published, the threshold that was used can be seen at the top of your Reasons Report between the minimum and maximum window used to complete your bid, but obviously too late to be used in formulating your bid.

Seniority  
Minimum Window <074:00>

Category  
**Threshold <081:30>**

Maximum Window <081:30>

The purpose of this Notepad is to discuss some strategies to ensure that your line award matches your desires as closely as your seniority allows, regardless of the threshold setting.

### Minimum/Maximum Credit Bids

Set Condition Minimum Credit and Set Condition Maximum Credit are two bid options that will allow you to bid for a line of time that falls within the lower or upper half of the LCW, respectively. When you bid Min or Max Credit, you are asking PBS to use your other bid preferences to build you a line within the applicable half of the LCW, thus minimizing or maximizing the amount of flying awarded on your initial line of time.

PBS will create three separate windows as follows:

- The normal LCW
- The Min Credit window – bottom of the LCW to the ALV
- The Max Credit window – the ALV to the top of the LCW

Each window has its own individual threshold. The Administrator adjusts the normal LCW threshold as required to meet the ALV. Normally, the Min Credit LCW threshold will be kept at the bottom of the Min Credit window and the Max Credit LCW threshold will be kept at the top of the Max Credit window. The result is that you will be awarded the minimum or maximum value line available consistent with your bid preferences and seniority – provided your Min or Max Credit bid is honored.

One of the tools available to the PBS Administrator is the ability to limit the number of minimum or maximum credit bids that are honored. For example, if every pilot in a category were to bid Max Credit, even setting the normal threshold to the bottom of the window could result in a solution that is too far above the published ALV to be acceptable. The number of Max Credit preferences that PBS will honor in that category could then be limited in seniority order and in sufficient number to allow PBS to arrive at a solution that meets the ALV. The Administrator may set the Minimum or Maximum Credit limit as low as zero so that even the most senior pilot in the category is restricted.

It may also be impossible for PBS to build you a line within the Min or Max Credit window, due to the fact that the Min or Max Credit LCW is one-half the size of the normal LCW. While Set Condition preferences such as Min or Max Credit must be above any award preferences, they can be placed below Prefer Off, Avoid or other Set Condition preferences. For example, if getting certain days off is more important than getting a Max Credit schedule, place the Set Condition Max Credit below the Prefer Off.

### **Alternative Strategies**

Even if you are the most senior pilot in the category, it is important that you bid for the possibility that the minimum or maximum credit bid preference may be restricted at your seniority. The PBS Reference Handbook provides a number of strategies that you can employ when using Min or Max Credit.

There are means other than using Min or Max Credit by which you can affect your awarded line value within the LCW. By using a strategic combination of specific Pairing and other requests, you can force your awarded line value to whichever end of the LCW you desire, regardless of the threshold setting.

### ***Min Credit Example:***

Assume an LCW of 75:00 – 90:00. Assume further that you would need 14-15 days of flying to fit inside the bottom of the LCW, e.g., 2-3 four-day trips and 1 or 2 three-day trips.

1. Start Pairings
2. Prefer Off [days you want off]
3. Avoid Pairings If [other bad stuff]
4. Avoid Pairings If Average Daily Credit < 5:15
5. Award Pairings If Pairing Length 4 Days Limit 3
6. Award Pairings If Pairing Length 3 Days Limit 2
7. Prefer Off [the entire month in priority order]

This bid groups will allow PBS to award no more than 3 four-day trips and 2 three-day trips. Line 4 ensures that each of these trips will be worth at least 5:15 per day, avoiding for example, a three-day trip that releases after midnight and that PBS considers to be a four-day trip.

If PBS awards you 3 four-day trips, there would then only be enough room within the LCW to award a single three-day trip, and if you are awarded only 2 four-day trips, then PBS would award 2 three-day trips. In either case, your line value will be near the bottom of the LCW, and the Prefer Off [the entire month] ensures that PBS will award you no more flying once you are inside the LCW, regardless of the threshold. This technique works because PBS cannot go into “Denial” mode (i. e., ignore a Prefer Off or Avoid) in order to get you above the threshold.

You would want to tailor the specifics and order of lines 2 and 3 to your seniority and your priorities, adding to them as desired. For example, if you prefer to fly five-day trips, you might add a bid group in front of the one above in which you ask for 3 five-day trips only, as follows:

1. Start Pairings
  2. Prefer Off [days you want off]
  3. Avoid Pairings If [other bad stuff]
  4. Avoid Pairings If Average Daily Credit < 5:15
  5. Award Pairings If Pairing Length 5 Days
  6. Clear Schedule and Start Next Bid Group
- 
7. Start Pairings
  8. Prefer Off [days you want off]
  9. Avoid Pairings If [other bad stuff]
  10. Avoid Pairings If Average Daily Credit < 5:15
  11. Award Pairings If Pairing Length 4 Days Limit 3
  12. Award Pairings If Pairing Length 3 Days Limit 2
  13. Prefer Off [the entire month in priority order]

In the example above, the first bid group will succeed only if PBS can find you three five-day trips that meet the stipulations in lines 2-4. If so, that will be your line award. If not, PBS will move on to the next bid group and look for 2-3 four-day trips and 1-2 three-day trips. In either case, your line award should be near the bottom of the LCW.

**Max Credit Example:**

Assume an LCW of 65:00 – 80:00. Assume further that you would need 14-15 days of flying to fit inside the top of the LCW, e.g., 2-3 four-day trips and 1 or 2 three-day trips.

1. Start Pairings
2. Prefer Off [days you don't want to fly]
3. Avoid Pairings If [bad stuff]
4. Avoid Pairings If Average Daily Credit < 5:15
5. Award Pairings If Pairing Length 3 Days Limit 2
6. Award Pairings If Pairing Length 4 Days Limit 3

The idea behind this example bid is to bid for the shorter trips first, followed by the longer ones. This will allow your last requested trip to be awarded, regardless of the threshold setting, because you will not yet be inside the LCW.

Again, you would want to tailor the specifics and order of lines 2 and 3 to your seniority and your priorities, adding to them as desired.

There are any number of permutations of this strategy that you might employ, depending upon the LCW, your relative seniority, and the priority you place on the value of your awarded line relative to other desires.

Note: Beware of Bidding "Set Condition Minimum or Maximum Credit Window" with a Clear Schedule Start Next Bid Group. If the PBS Administrator limits the number of Min or Max credit bidders, PBS may jump to your next bid group.

As always, feel free to email the PBS Committee with any questions or comments at [DALPBS@alpa.org](mailto:DALPBS@alpa.org)

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