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19-05

Line Award Process

Your Delta MEC PBS Committee regularly receives questions regarding the PBS award process, mostly along the lines of “Why does it take so long?” We hope that the following answers to some of these questions will give you a better understanding of everything that goes into this monthly event.

Q: What is the overall process by which lines of time are constructed and awarded? Who activates the runs and how long does it take before the results of the first runs are available?

A: Under the terms of the PWA, PBS is overseen and administered by the PBS Work Group (PWG) which is comprised of three Company representatives and three ALPA pilot representatives. The Delta Crew Planners build the rotations, publish the bid packages and launch the bid runs. This process is overseen by the Delta PBS Administrator, a Company representative to the PWG.

Monthly line bidding closes at 1800 EST on the 11th of every month. The PBS Administrator then loads the final pilot data from the Data Base Management System (DBMS.) This data load provides one last update of all conversion, vacation, training and schedule information for each pilot. The runs can be launched after the data load is completed.

Delta can process many categories’ runs simultaneously—and it does. Recall that PBS does not allow the planners to input the desired result, such as a certain number of regular lines, an average line value or a specific amount of open time remaining. Rather, they only can manage certain basic settings in an attempt to achieve the desired result.

For regular lines, the only available settings are the threshold, a limit on Min and Max Credit bidders, and the maximum stack height (the number of duty periods that may remain open on any given day). For reserve lines, the planners can only set a minimum daily reserve coverage and a limit to the total number of reserve lines awarded.

Using those settings, along with the contractual parameters such as the Line Construction Window (LCW) and reserve rule parameters, PBS simply works from the top-down to award each pilot the type of line he desires, to the extent that his desires remain available to him after the bid preferences of more senior pilots have been considered.

There are 76 categories at Delta, consisting of 38 Captain and 38 F/O categories. The planners will normally set off 10-20 runs per category with varying settings to find a solution that is acceptable to the Delta MEC PBS Committee. The acceptability of a run is determined in terms of the amount of open time remaining, whether that open time is spread evenly throughout the bid period, average line value within 1 hour of the published ALV, a reasonable amount of unstacking, etc. Runs can take anywhere from less than a minute in small categories to as long as ten minutes in a large one. Once the PBS Administrator has an acceptable solution, he forwards it via email to begin the approval process.

The ALPA pilot Quality Controllers (QCers) begin the QC process as soon as the PBS Administrator emails the proposed solutions, usually the afternoon of the 12th each month. Once the Captain run for a category has been agreed to by the PBS Committee, the Planners will launch the F/O runs for that category. While preliminary results for Captain categories will often be posted to Deltanet by the evening of the 13th, issues such as bid closing delays, holiday months, etc. can push this timeline back. The PWA requires that adjusted (final) line awards be made available in DBMS no later than 1800E on the 17th of the month.

Q: How many people are typically involved in the review process (Delta and ALPA), and how much time is spent per category?

A: The six Delta planners and the PBS Administrator produce the PBS runs at Delta each month, and at least two pilot volunteers from the PBS Committee perform the QC review process. Some categories can be approved within minutes, some categories take longer if the QC pilots request different solutions.

Q: What does the PBS Committee look for in the review process?

A: Each run is analyzed by a minimum of two PBS Committee members to determine its compliance with the requirements outlined in the PWA—within one hour of the ALV, limited coverage, etc. The PBS Committee must agree to any run that does not meet these requirements. The QCers analyze results from both the Company’s perspective and the pilot’s perspective to achieve a balance between operational reliability and pilot quality of life, as mandated by **MOU #1 Paragraph B. 4.** of the PWA. These considerations include the following:

Operational issues

- Is there an acceptable amount of open time remaining?
- Is the remaining open time evenly distributed?
- Is there an acceptable balance of reserve coverage throughout the month?

Quality of life issues

- Has each pilot’s seniority been honored concerning awarded rotations, reserve lines of time, etc.?
- Was coverage used appropriately in both regular and reserve line awards?
- Were limits to Min or Max Credit and/or reserve bidders used appropriately?
- Is there an excessive amount of Secondary Line Generation (SLGs)?

Q: Are there issues unique to specific positions?

A: Unique situations do occur. The trip mix may be an issue when the prevailing trips in a category do not easily combine to build lines within the published LCW. Holiday months have their problems since most pilots generally bid for the holiday periods off.

Q: Will bid results always have to be reviewed or do you see a day in the not too distant future when PBS will be FULLY automated - perhaps because the software is written that performs the QC process?

A: No. We deliberately chose a PBS system that does not forecast the effect that an individual’s line award will have on the overall result because we felt that making available to each pilot all the rotations and/or days off that have not yet been awarded to a senior pilot is of paramount importance. As such, the process of reviewing each run for PWA compliance, operational desirability and quality is a highly subjective one that would be impossible to codify. This QC review is essential to achieving the proper balance between operational reliability and pilot quality of life.

Q: As line pilots, is there anything we can do to help the review process (bidding procedures, review of bid results, etc.)?

A: The best and only thing that we ask of the line pilot is to be patient. The time we spend QCing bid results and asking the Company for alternative solutions is necessary to deliver the best results for the pilot group.

As always, feel free to email the PBS Committee with any questions or comments at DALPBS@alpa.org.

This is a product of the Delta MEC PBS Committee