

Delta

Pilots and Management Achieve Gains by Working Together

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The 11,500 Delta pilots make up 23 percent of ALPA's members and since July 2012 have been operating under an industry-leading contract, due in large part to the commitment of the pilots' Master Executive Council (MEC) to seize opportunities to negotiate amendments to the pilots' working agreement (PWA) six months before its amendable date.

The MEC agreed to an expedited negotiating process that culminated in an agreement in less than four months. The agreement, which included three pay increases in the past 18 months, provides industry-leading pay rates, profit sharing, and retirement plan improvements. It also facilitated Delta's acquisition of a fleet of 88 B-717s. The first of these was put into operations this past fall. B-717s will continue to be added to the fleet through 2015. In addition, three B-737-900s per month are being delivered to Delta, and the company recently announced an order for 30 A321s and 10 A330s.

The airline has announced that it will hire 300 pilots, but in all likelihood that number will be much higher. The most recent advance entitlements bids have provided for new captain positions, and prospects are favorable for substantial upward movement for Delta pilots. These prospects are further enhanced by the scope protections in the 2012 PWA that

increase the share of all Delta domestic flying operated on Delta narrowbodies and ensures new international flying opportunities for the pilot group.

The MEC continues to work to improve the pilots' pay and working conditions whenever opportunities present themselves. Since the conclusion of Section 6 negotiations, letters of agreement that provide scheduling enhancements as well as protections for Pacific flying and the Virgin Atlantic joint venture have been achieved.

The MEC has also placed a significant focus on safe flying operations through the Central Air Safety Committee (CASC), which is composed of more than 200 volunteers who serve on 11 safety subcommittees. In 2013, the CASC was highly engaged locally, nationally, and globally.

This past year, Delta management invited the CASC to join its Data Analysis Group, Threat Management Group, and Standard Text Oversight Committee. The pilots are also co-sponsoring with Delta Flight Ops a year-long Active Pilot Monitoring Workshop to produce recommendations for improving how to identify, train, and evaluate critical pilot monitoring skills.

Three areas of the pilots' CASC initiatives have seen marked involvement:

Aviation Safety Action Program. Knowing that the prospect of formal simulator or flight training can have a negative effect on pilots' willingness to report errors, the CASC, the FAA, and Delta have agreed to carefully weigh



PHOTO BY FIO CHRIS NEVINS (DELTA)

A view of the old Terminal 3 at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

the necessity for training if a report is pure sole-source and would otherwise be unknown to the company or the FAA. Significantly, the formal training rate has dropped to less than one percent.

Automation addiction and loss of control. Automation addiction and loss of control are significant safety concerns. The CASC continues to advocate for a unified effort to teach specific manual flying skill maintenance exercises.

Unstable approaches with no go-arounds. The CASC is studying other airlines' efforts that have successfully reduced unstable approaches while improving go-around compliance rates to better understand what could be successfully applied at Delta.

The joint efforts of the MEC, the CASC, and Delta's flight safety team have produced a safety culture and record that are the envy of the airline industry. This record is due in large measure to the competence and professionalism of Delta line pilots, who have made it their mission to see that the approximately 160 million passengers who boarded a Delta airplane in 2013 arrived safely at their destinations. ●

DAL at a Glance

Number of pilots: 11,704

Joint ventures and alliances: SkyTeam Alliance and joint ventures with Air France-KLM-Alitalia, Virgin Australia, and Virgin Atlantic

Operations: Delta and its Connection carriers fly to more than 330 destinations in 65 countries on 6 continents

Pilot bases: Atlanta, Ga.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; Los Angeles, Calif.; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.; New York City; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Seattle, Wash.

Hub cities: Amsterdam; Atlanta, Ga.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.; New York-JFK; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Tokyo-Narita

Headquarters: Atlanta, Ga.

Fleet: More than 700 mainline airplanes consisting of A319s, A320s, A330s, B-717s, B-737s, B-747s, B-757s, B-767s, B-777s, DC-9s, MD-88s, and MD-90s