

# Spirit

## Pilots, Airline See 'Astounding' Growth

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“We’re not the same airline we were five years ago,” says Capt. Chris Amongero, the pilots’ Master Executive Council (MEC) chairman. “We’re growing at an astounding rate, and it’s not slowing down.”

In 2014, Spirit Airlines, a self-described ultra-low-cost carrier, will have more than 860 pilots on the property and 53 airplanes. The pilot group that was once based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Atlantic City, N.J.; and Detroit, Mich.; now has bases across the country.

Additionally, over the next two years, Spirit is expecting to have 20 more Airbuses delivered to the property and will hire more than 400 pilots. With the implementation of the 2010 pilot contract, Spirit has become an attractive employer. In 2013, the pilots who were on the property in 2010 became outnumbered by those who weren’t. Each month, new-hire classes are filled, and pilot volunteers work hard to educate the new hires about ALPA and being a Spirit pilot.

“It’s not easy to keep up with the influx of pilots,” adds Amongero. “But we know that without contract education, there simply can’t be contract compliance. We have to provide the resources to our new pilots so that they can quickly learn the ins and outs of our contract. The MEC keeps an impressive stack of contracts on hand at all times just to meet the demand. And we are always looking for

new ways to reach the newest pilots on the property. It’s challenging, but a challenge that must be met.”

Due to the growth of the airline and the pilot group, the MEC has developed different strategies to work with management. Soon after the 2010 contract was signed, the pilots went into strict enforcement mode as management failed to abide by the new agreement. However, as the grievances piled up and arbitrations became delayed, both the pilot group and management looked for new ways to work together, establishing a more effective way to interact.

For instance, a number of grievances within the last few months have been resolved without the need for expensive, time-consuming arbitrations. Pilot and management discussions have sped up the process and resolved grievances that in the past would have gone to arbitration, allowing both parties to get back to the work of moving passengers.

“Although it’s a step in the right direction that the company and the pilots are working better together,” acknowledges Amongero, “it should be clear that when necessary we are more than willing to pursue a grievance as far as needed to reach a fair decision that respects our contract.”

This is especially important as the pilots’ contract amendable date inches ever closer. In 2015, the five-year agreement becomes open under Section 6. Preparations by the pilot group are well under way as they seek additional gains and to protect

what they already have. With their 2010 contract, the pilot group made impressive gains in salary and work rules, while keeping an almost unheard of provision—four days off between trips. This



**Capt. Andy Nelson greets passengers on a flight from Portland, Ore., to Las Vegas, Nev. Fun fact: The couple had just gotten engaged on that flight.**

allows Spirit pilots to have easier commutes and maintain a work/home balance that is rare in the industry. The pilots’ quality of life is something the group will be aggressively protecting at the bargaining table.

“We are aware what an anomaly our airline is,” notes Amongero. “We were once a small airline that flew to a handful of domestic destinations. Now we’re expanding our southern U.S.- and Latin American-based network and reaching across the country with new domiciles in Las Vegas, Nev.; Dallas, Tex.; and Chicago, Ill. Although this expansion has come with some growing pains, we are committed to working with the pilots already on the property and those who are coming to the airline to make Spirit both a financial success and a good company to work for.”

### SPA at a Glance

**Pilots joined ALPA:** 1996

**Number of pilots:** 860

**Headquarters:** Miramar, Fla.

**Pilot bases:** Atlantic City, N.J.; Chicago, Ill.; Dallas, Tex.; Detroit, Mich.; Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; and Las Vegas, Nev.

**Fleet:** 29 A319s, 22 A320s, and 2 A321s