

Air Wisconsin pilot leaders spent most of 2009 building on the solid foundation they laid in 2008, a foundation designed to enhance communications and to further strengthen their committee infrastructure. Both initiatives have been highly successful, and the number of active volunteers has

in 2001. When United Airlines put ARW's United Express flying out for re-bidding in 2003, the pilots and management negotiated and ratified a restructuring letter of agreement intended to retain the United flying. Despite the pilots' concessions, including extending their contract to 2011, United ultimately rejected the feeder contract with Air Wisconsin. Shortly thereafter, Air Wisconsin invested in US Airways during its bankruptcy and began operating as Airways Express in 2005. Since becoming a US Airways Express carrier, the airline's financial performance has remained strong, which is positive news for those looking to the next contract negotiation cycle.

Air Wisconsin

Negotiating Coalition Seeks To Strengthen Pilots' Role at Negotiating Table in 2010

By Kimberly Seitz, ALPA Senior Communications Specialist

more than tripled. The capstone of the Master Executive Council's activities this past year was participating in the newly opened Section 6 negotiations at fellow US Airways feeders Piedmont and PSA.

While Air Wisconsin pilots' current contract does not become amendable until October 2011, pilot negotiators are already knee deep in the process as participants in negotiations with the PDT and PSA pilots and their management teams. "We are blazing uncharted paths

through our coordination, and these efforts will lead to stronger and more robust agreements in the future at PSA, PDT and ARW," says F/O Mark Lockwood, the pilots' MEC Negotiating Committee chairman. The new Negotiating Committee members are gaining valuable negotiating experience that will serve their pilots well when they sit down at the table to bargain with management.

Pilot negotiators from ARW will continue to sit at the table with PDT and PSA pilot negotiators as all three pilot groups work together to circumvent any attempts by management to pit the pilots against each other, a common alienating tactic used by the managements of regional airlines.

"We want our management teams to compete on how well they can run an airline," Lockwood says. "Our airlines appear to prefer the old system of competing based on how little they can pay their valued employees. That's got to stop."

While many observers view the ARW collective bargaining agreement as one of the best in the airline industry, ARW pilots don't need to be reminded about the sacrifices and concessions they have had to make since they signed a 4-year contract

in preparation for determining Contract 2011 goals and objectives, the MEC and Negotiating Committee sought feedback and input from the pilots through an online survey. MEC leaders and negotiators met with ALPA staff in Charlotte, N.C., in mid-December to develop a strategic plan for the upcoming negotiations and to decide how to address several current challenges, such as Air Wisconsin's recent decision to implement a FOQA program without ALPA as a participant. As goals and objectives become more clearly defined, pilot leaders will continue to effectively communicate and inform their members of the progress. This information sharing is a deliberate effort of the MEC's revitalized communications plan.

"Communications—the Cornerstone of Solidarity" is the slogan that the MEC Communications Committee adopted for the inaugural campaign launched in late 2008. The campaign is designed to disseminate quality information and generate meaningful dialogue among the pilots and ARW union leaders. "Our communications team takes great care to ensure that every publication reaches the line with a clear message and carries the voice of the union," says Capt. Joe Ellis, the ARW MEC chairman.

As the largest privately held regional airline in the United States, Air Wisconsin Airlines Corporation, based in Appleton, Wisc., works in partnership with and provides feeder service for US Airways. Due to cutbacks in US Airways flying, 20 pilots are furloughed, although the airline tentatively plans to call back all of the furloughed pilots in early 2010 when it begins hiring. 🌐



Capt. Josh Manning at La Guardia Airport.

ARW at a Glance

Pilots Joined ALPA: 1982 as a result of the Union of Professional Airmen merger with ALPA

Number of Pilots: 669

Operations: Nearly 500 departures per day to 31 states and two Canadian provinces; with service to 70 cities throughout North America, the airline carries nearly 6 million passengers per year

Headquarters: Appleton, Wisc.

Domiciles: New York (LGA); Norfolk, Va.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; Washington, D.C. (DCA)

Fleet: 70 Canadair 50-seat regional jets