



We welcome letters to the Editor from pilots in good standing. We will edit them if necessary, but we will make every effort to preserve the author's meaning. Letters must include the writer's name and phone number. We will publish only letters that have not been sent to other persons or posted publicly – e.g., in crew rooms. Please keep your letters to 200 words or less.

#### CREDIBILITY

The article in the January 29, 2000, Business Section of the Charlotte Observer entitled "More Regional Flights Urged by US Airways" is right on the mark. Unfortunately, it fails to mention a hidden issue held by a large portion of the pilot group; and that is the creditability of US Airways senior management.

An article in the Observer's August 7, 1999, issue mentioned that the US Airways pilots signed a concessionary contract that included pay and benefits cuts in return for "Rocket Growth" and a share of the profits in the form of stock options. The idea was to help bring the Company's high cost in line with our competitors.

The following is what the pilots at US Airways have seen since our "give backs":

- 1) While the pilots gave US Airways concessions other company labor groups received front-end pay increases or signing bonuses.
- 2) The expected reduction in the cost of operation did not appear.
- 3) The promised "Rocket Growth" was replaced with "Prudent Growth or Business Growth." This growth was the only way for any pilot to receive a significant pay raise.

- 4) The \$50 stock option is now priced less than \$20.

Management now states they need the regional jets for its survival. To many pilots, management has cried "wolf" (no pun intended) once too often and their credibility among many pilots is lower than their stock price.

Many pilots are willing to negotiate on the regional jet issue but negotiations involve a give and take on both sides and management has shown its penchant for taking from the pilot group and NOT giving anything back. The pilots are tired of giving and management taking.

James Dunn (CLT)  
B-767

#### UNIT COSTS

According to the November 29, 1999, Aviation Week article titled "US Airways Attendants Adopt Tough Stance," US Airways system wide costs (adjusted for average stage length) are 13.74 cents compared with 6.24 cents for Southwest and 9.9 cents for Delta. The article also states that in 1998, labor accounted for 39 percent of the carrier's operating budget. Therefore, if all of the US Airways employees worked for nothing (just the love of aviation) that would reduce the seat mile cost by 5.36 cents and bring it down to 8.38 cents. That cost is still not

low enough to make us competitive with Southwest. There is something wrong with this picture and management's continuing argument that labor is the only thing standing in their way of having a competitive cost structure.

*Ted Unruh (DCA)  
B-737-200*

**REGIONAL JETS**

It seems to me that there are a lot of negative perceptions about allowing additional small jets. Basically, in my thoughts, what it boils down to is what do you think is the greater threat to your job: management or the competition? I know that Delta's \$3,000,000,000 is not for our good, and the same for the rest of the competition. Our system has the highest yields in the country, everyone wants a piece of it, but those yields are decreasing. Our bottom line should improve as the A330s increase our lift but we need to retain the high-yield feed. Today the percentage of businessmen traveling on regional airlines with RJs is over 50 percent greater than their turboprop counterparts.

We have the most leverage at this time to negotiate the small jet issue, like an option, that leverage decreases with time. Our Regional Jet Task Force's recommendations, the information the MEC receives from ALPA's Economic and Financial Analysis Department, and management's letters show the importance of reaching an agreement sooner than later. However, the pilot group needs to feel negotiating now is in our best interest or it will not be successful. The Northwest pilots reached an agreement insisting small jets be flown by their regional partners to prevent having several of them replace their mainline aircraft at lower rates. Mr. Wolf has exceeded the growth rates we negotiated. This year we are taking delivery of 26 aircraft in addition to all the old ones being replaced, including seven A330s; this is much greater than the 11 per year average loss of aircraft from 1990 through 1997.

Let's reach a mutually beneficial settlement on the small jets (approximately 50 seats or less) while we have more leverage to get better terms, than waiting three years and losing more of the high-yield traffic. I worked at Eastern and when labor and management didn't work

well together the Board paid Lorenzo to come and battle the employees, which didn't work out well for anyone. Mr. Wolf has said he will leave if he cannot grow the Company and he is recognized as one of the best in the business.

I appreciate Chris Beebe's hard work and think he should not be the focus of unhappy people's criticism. He has not given away a thing and received several favorable agreements with the Company.

*George Simmons (BWI)  
B-737-200*

**REGIONAL JETS 2**

If you had to buy a full fare ticket and you had the choice of flying on a Dash 8 or an RJ, which ticket would you buy? If you had the choice of changing planes in Philadelphia or a nonstop RJ flight, which ticket would you buy? If we don't give our customers what they want, are we going to force them into our Dash 8s or are they going to walk across the terminal and buy a ticket on Delta or Continental? Is our frequent flyer program going to stop them from choosing an airplane they believe is safer?

Is the Company going to pay us to fly RJs and our mechanics to park them? Is this cost competitive with Comair and Continental Express?

We need to protect our jobs, can we do that with minimum block hour guarantees, Captain positions and no furlough provisions? How does giving our customers another reason not to fly US Airways protect our jobs? Do we have more negotiating leverage now or if we wait until the next contract?

We all want as much money and time off as possible. I also want to be able to work here for the next 18 years and retire with a full pension, so I have one last question. Is it possible to kill the goose that lays the golden egg? This one I can answer – ask any former Eastern employee.

*Daniel Everts (CLT)  
737-300*

**CORPORATE CULTURE**

The Jan/Feb article about corporate culture was "right on target." Sadly, it was aimed at the

wrong target. The article ignored the role of management in establishing a corporate culture. It implied that WE must initiate the change. We can't. It flows down from the CEO. What IS our culture, when senior executives publicly denigrate employees and blame us for problems they created? They abrogate our contract to create bargaining chips for further concessions. The Senior VP of Human Resources pens a letter that contains little but lies and half-truths, and blames us for the Company's problems. Even Chris Beebe was finally compelled to acknowledge reality. Captain Hoffman's insightful letter in the same issue correctly identified the source of our suicidal corporate culture. It's not the employees.

The authors' reference to Delta was a poor choice for their case. They overlooked Delta's more recent history. Ron Allen destroyed the "family" concept, and earned the enmity of stockholders. The employees were not responsible for problems during his reign. His predecessors nurtured a special relationship with the employees, and they reciprocated. Stockholders benefited. I passed through ATL on a business trip when the employees presented a new B-767 (purchased by them) to Mr. Garrett. I watched part of the ceremony. Those days are gone at Delta. By the way, I was an EAL pilot. The F/A uniforms WERE disgusting. However, the F/As were top-notch. The employees weren't the problem.

The discussion of Southwest was more appropriate. Their unique corporate culture is the product of Mr. Kelleher's leadership. While the company has its "warts," employees are treated with respect, and their stockholders benefit from employee suggestions. US Airways is rumored to have a suggestion program. I've seen no evidence of it. Investors have clearly indicated which company has the best management.

Interestingly, Messrs. Wolf and Gangwal received the 1999 PlaneBusiness "Ron Allen Airline Management Award." It is awarded to airline CEOs who have destroyed shareholder value with gross mis-management. The industry's highest-paid airline executives ignored common sense and warnings from employee groups, causing widespread cancellations of flights. This resulted in the loss of our high-revenue business travelers. Lack of a fuel hedging program caused our operating costs to skyrocket. And it's OUR fault? No Kool-Aid for me, thanks. I had no

input in those decisions, and I refuse to accept the blame. The authors' opinion of our executives' competence is not widely accepted, either by major stockholders or the financial press.

As always, I do my best to ensure that my passengers have a pleasant flight experience. I consider myself to be the consummate professional. I am a proud graduate of the three-day Leadership Development Program. Nevertheless, my efforts are limited by management decisions. I ask only that I be allowed to do my job to the best of my ability. My best efforts are being sabotaged by an incompetent and uncaring management.

I tried for years to change this company's corporate culture. Without management's cooperation, it's impossible. I now work only on safety-related issues. I don't mind being led, but I sure hate being managed.

*Andy Peck (PHL)*  
*B-757*

#### **CORPORATE CULTURE 2**

The crew room wall article authored by Philip Gibson, Lou Nemeth, and Marshall Rogers really hit the nail on the head. Management needs to figure out a way to earn the respect of all the employee groups. I personally would much rather be "committed" to the good of the company than just "complying" with the rules.

Another thing we could do is ask management to reissue employee numbers from 1 to 50,000 or however many employees there are.

*Peter C. Thyrré (PIT)*  
*B-767-intl*

#### **CORPORATE CULTURE 3**

The recent *US AIRWAVES* (January/February) articles by the Boston LEC, and by the three CLT pilots, addressing our "corporate culture" certainly hit home—not just with me, but, I would assume, with most of my fellow BOS-based pilots.

It was as a result of this so-called "corporate culture" that US Airways lost a very valuable

asset last month. Our beloved secretary, Lori-Ann Dixey, resigned after a decade of service to this airline. And it would appear that it was this corporation's "culture" of penuriousness and narrow-mindedness that chased away such a valuable and respected employee.

You had all probably met her at some time or another. When you stuck your head into the BOS Chief Pilot's office during a layover to look at the latest bid, or catch up on the latest rumors, you were greeted by a very friendly, very helpful, attractive young lady with, as my dear late mother would say, "the map of Ireland all over her face." That was our "Dixey"—as she always insisted on being called.

With all due respect to the several Chief Pilots she worked for—and they, too, would probably admit this—Dixey was the glue that held the BOS pilot base together. In fact, the title of "Secretary" was a gross understatement when applied to Lori-Ann Dixey. She was, at times, Chief Pilot, Assistant Chief Pilot, Base Administrator, Base Coordinator, Crew Field Services, and, of course, den mother. She always joked that she didn't need to have any children—she already had 200 of them.

When you needed something, you called Dixey. She was always there, and she usually had the answer.

For example, it was she that informed me that my flight from SFO to PHL to BOS was canceled due to a winter storm several years ago. I had had the foresight to call her before I left the hotel in SFO, because, as is usually the case during irregular operations, I couldn't get hold of Systems, and would not have learned of our fate until we'd gotten to the airport.

And last September, during one of the hurricanes, Dixey (who was fighting flu-like symptoms at the time) found herself with a crew room full of refugee crewmembers, from all bases, who could not get through to Systems. Instead of leaving at 5 p.m., which she was perfectly entitled to do, she stayed until after 7 p.m., taking down the names of all the stranded crewmembers, and, on her own volition, she called several hotels in town and found everybody rooms. (By the way, during the recent renovation of our terminal in BOS, a Crew Field Services office was incorporated into the design. It has never been staffed.)

Not only was Dixey willing to take anybody's bid over the phone at any time, she would also call and remind pilots to bid if she happened to notice that they hadn't. I've no doubt that she

probably saved this company thousands of dollars in sick claims, by reminding pilots to bid on time so they wouldn't have to call in sick for their anniversaries or their kids' Little League games.

And, of course, there were those who abused her good nature. Like the one guy who called up on the day the winter exam was due and wanted her to do it for him. Or the guy that called one day and asked her to walk down the hall to the Credit Union and ask them a question for him, because he couldn't get through to them on the phone. Alas, people always called upon Dixey because it seemed that the word "no" was not in her vocabulary.

There are thousands of examples of how Lori-Ann Dixey went above and beyond her job description of "Secretary," but one sticks in my mind as being particularly poignant.

Several years ago, our wonderful Chief Pilot, Capt. Lou Kosakowski (God rest his soul), waged a courageous battle against cancer. Whereas most of us would have just taken the medical retirement and called it good, Capt. Lou, even at age 58, was determined to get back to the office once again and be with "his guys." This determination gave him a goal, and kept him fighting. He would dutifully take the train to Boston from his Connecticut home to spend at least three days a week in the office. Sadly, the cancer treatments he was undergoing sometimes resulted in his losing his train of thought, and often made it difficult for him to communicate—with most of us, that is.

When Lou would be in the office, or when he'd call from home, Dixey, with the patience of a saint, would calmly help him construct his thoughts, and convey them. Long before his illness, Lou always remarked that he hoped Dixey would someday marry his son. Could a man pay any higher compliment to a young lady?

Yet, all of this woman's tremendous attributes, and her invaluable contributions to the airline, were not recognized within the black hole of the "corporate culture." Lori-Ann Dixey was grossly underappreciated, and grossly underpaid; and when she discovered that other secretaries in other departments were being hired off the street for more money than she was making after 10 years, she began to cast a glance at other career opportunities. And despite heavy lobbying efforts by the BOS Chief Pilots, the BOS LEC, and the rank-and-file pilots (some of these efforts Dixey knew about



—some she didn't), the company was only able to offer a token raise.

And the excuses were pitiful: "It's a small base." "It's not a hub." And, my favorite, "It's only a one-person office."

Our point exactly! Dixey didn't have 12 other people working in the office with her! She did it all herself! And for less money!

In her farewell letter to the BOS pilots, Dixey wrote, "In addition to a significantly higher salary, I will be working for an organization that takes pride in its employee group and treats them with respect and admiration."

I found it infuriatingly ironic that on the same day that Dixey's letter appeared in my mailbox, there too was that rah-rah letter from Messrs. Wolf and Gangwal (and a half-dozen

other suits) imploring us to "win our customers back."

I might suggest to the authors of that letter that if our "corporate culture" wasn't so focused upon the browbeating of employees—with the glaring exceptions of awarding executive bonuses, and hiring a seemingly endless string of clueless vice-presidents who cost the company billions before inevitably leaving "to pursue other interests"—then perhaps we could retain invaluable assets like Lori-Ann Dixey, which would most certainly enhance our chances of "winning our customers back."

*Richard S. O'Kane (BOS)*  
*DC-9*