

Hotel Updates



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The Crew Accommodations Committee's work has picked up the last two months. We're now in the middle of the summer, and we have made some progress, but as we all know flying the line, there is still much to do. We must still review a backlog of cities, and the list continues to grow. I'll review our accomplishments, as well as our plans for the next couple of months.

I hope that the recent announcement of the proposed United merger will not interfere with some of the progress we have made or what we would like to see accomplished in the near future. Even if the merger is allowed, I don't think there would be any combination of hotels, crews, or anything for well over a year. So, we still have to take care of our own house and problems and not worry too much about United. I have talked in the past with my counterpart at United and will continue to do so in the future. They do have some contract language that would be very helpful to us, and I believe we have some things to offer them as well. We will probably talk a bit more now as things go forward. Again, I want to be able to make sure our middle management doesn't lose sight of the fact that we still have hotel issues to deal with for quite some time.

As I described in my last article, we made two trips to Europe to review Frankfurt, Germany and Manchester, England. We decided upon the Renaissance Hotel in Manchester. In Frankfurt, until the end of 2000, we will experience somewhat of a mess with respect to our hotel accommodations. Our problem began when the Crowne Plaza informed our management that, upon the expiration of our contract

in May, they wouldn't be able to handle more than 20 rooms a night. In May, we added a flight from CLT, and changed two flights to A330s. We had two options: put one crew in the Crowne Plaza, and find a new home for the other two crews, or find a hotel that could handle all of our crews. The hotel market in the Frankfurt area is very strong, and we didn't want to put any crews in downtown Frankfurt. Adding to the problem was the fact that we required these additional rooms in approximately three weeks. Trying to buy hotel rooms at a discount on short notice is like trying to find bargain airfares at the last minute. It doesn't work.

Our best solution follows. The PHL A330 crew will continue to stay at the Crowne Plaza for the next year. The CLT crew will stay at the Dorint Hotel in Mainz for at least two years. The PIT A330 crews will split time between the Dorint Hotel in Mainz and, for 47 dates that are posted in the PIT briefing rooms, the Dorint Hotel in Mannheim. Beginning in January 2001, the PIT crew will move to the new Dorint Hotel in Wiesbaden, where we should remain for quite some time. All the crews in the Dorint hotels will receive the "no wait" guarantee for rooms. The Dorint hotels promise that if any crewmember has to wait for a room for more than 15 minutes after the scheduled arrival time, the room will be free to US Airways, and the crewmember will receive a credit to spend in the hotel. We posted information in the briefing rooms describing additional crew benefits. This solution was the very best that we could come up with working so close to the deadline.

We also completed an inspection in Munich, and found no suitable alternatives. Again, our

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middle management worked too close to the expiration of the contract, which was at the end of May, and we almost lost our current hotel due to management’s slow reaction. We had investigated most of the areas and the options our management were considering, and we told them they were unacceptable. Management didn’t want to take the increase the Forum hotel was looking for, but didn’t do anything else except tell the Forum that we needed to look around and couldn’t accept the increase the hotel wanted. The Forum took this to mean we couldn’t afford the hotel and signed another airline at a higher price than they were offering US Airways. The other airline didn’t have to think twice about the rate—it was very happy to get the Forum at the rate offered, along with the location.

After signing the other airline, the Forum gave us a one-month extension to find our new home. This was done with about one week left on our contract with the hotel. For some reason, it surprised our middle managers that the Forum found another airline and that the offer for US Airways was no longer any good. The Forum assumed US Airways couldn’t afford the hotel, and they went out and took care of their own business. Now our management was left with very few choices, and their costs were higher than what the Forum had offered us in the beginning. The Forum was not interested in having three airlines, so it seemed as though our time there was quickly coming to an end. However, the frontline employee in the purchasing department who went over to Munich to look at the options was able to get the Forum to reconsider its position. We were then able to come to an agreement with this hotel. All this cost us was quite a bit of time, and we are now paying even a higher rate than we would have if our middle managers accepted what we told them in the beginning and signed with the Forum at the original offer. It’s a total waste of our Company’s money.

Middle management continues to frustrate our committee by requiring frontline employees to chase after deals and options that don’t exist. We have many domestic problems that they are not addressing. We are trying to persuade upper management to redirect this department to focus on our problems and find solutions, instead of trying to purchase hotel rooms the way other purchasing departments in our Company operate. Since hotel rooms are perishable goods, trying to purchase them as if

they were durable goods doesn’t work. The result is a rapidly growing pile of work as more and more cities come out of contract. After we finally reach an agreement, the department often requires six months to obtain the necessary signatures with our hotel.

In order to combat this problem, we completed our own inspection of the EWR area in hopes of finding a new long hotel for our crews. The contract expired at the end of April with the frontline employees unable to devote the necessary time to EWR. Our crews know how long we have been trying to get our middle management to focus their energy on this problem city.

We were finally able to get the managers to agree to a hotel change in Newark for the long overnight. What was most amazing about this change was that our management didn’t go on the site inspection, and didn’t follow up and make a site visit before agreeing to a contract with the hotel. They took our word for it. When we set out to do the site, our goal was to find a better location and to try and reduce the travel time to the long overnight. I checked with United about this city, and found that their crews stay in Morristown, NJ, about a 30-minute drive from the Newark airport. Our new hotel is in East Hanover and is about a 20-minute drive from the airport. Our inspector traveled all around the Newark area trying to find a closer hotel that had enough around so we wouldn’t be isolated like we are now. We found a few of these locations but the hotels were not interested in business because they had all the business they needed at the moment.

The East Hanover hotel has a very nice location with four restaurants within easy walking distance, plus a driving range, a local gym, a bowling alley, and a scheduled run to a local mall about 10 minutes away for those who want to shop. With the research we did, we feel this is the best option for our crews at the present time. We also feel it will solve the location problems we are experiencing at our current hotel, because the drive will be shorter and there are alternate routes to the hotel should one way get backed up. We left open the option of adjusting the cut of time between the long and short overnights, depending on the comments we receive from the crews. We started staying at the new EWR long hotel on July 1.

With the two problems our management ran into in Munich and with them agreeing on our hotel choice in Newark, just on our recommendation, we are hoping they have realized that

they need to use your committee more, since it could save them a lot of work and money. We hope to demonstrate that we are capable of finding acceptable cities and performing inspections on our own. Who is better qualified to perform this work than someone who will have to stay in the hotel? While this will be an uphill battle, I believe that we can show the Company several ways in which we will save money. First, by permitting our committee to perform the site inspections, our Company will

not need to hire more employees to do the job. We can also complete most of the work while we are on layovers. This measure will reduce travel costs, and also free a seat in the back of the airplane that can be filled by a revenue passenger or a non-rev trying to get somewhere.

Your committee members are out on the line flying a full month, so we have an idea what is going on in a city and if there are better alternatives to what we're using now. If they don't want

Disapproval List

CLE Ramada—Another city for which we've offered a fix and are ready to inspect, but await action from our management.

IND short—Contracts with both short hotels, Ramada and Quality Inn South, have expired. This is another city we're ready to move on if management agrees. A question for everybody: If we're able to secure tower rooms at the Ramada, is there still a noise problem from FedEx? Let us know.

IND long—Started some movement of crews here, but not as quickly as we would like. We should be out all together for August.

Off the list are EWR long and Tampa long as we move more crews out of the Tampa long and start a new hotel in EWR.

Watch List

ABE long—This hotel is new to the list. We do know the hotel's shortcomings but don't know of a better place right now. The hotel is working to renovate the rooms, which should help.

CHS long—This is the Radisson for long overnights. We use the same hotel for both overnights. Again, there's a location problem. Watching to see if we keep ENOUGH rooms to keep two hotels happy. If a pattern emerges whereby we require two hotels, we will begin the search for a long hotel.

LAX long—We're having a continuing problem with the computer program that assigns the hotels. In addition we would like to review all hotels in the LAX area and find a better location for our longer overnights than Culver City.

MYR—The Landmark is new to the list. The condition of the hotel and the noise from other the guests are problems. I will watch for other comments and should be able to look into it once the summer season is over.

We removed the CMH long hotel from the Watch List, as they resolved our transportation problems. The new general manager made a big difference in this hotel's operation.

Last month, we processed 74 OF-310 forms—that's up from the month before, but down a bit from our usual number. This month, we processed 92 OF-310 forms. Five of these were good comments and 13 dealt with crew meals. Thanks to all for taking the time to fill out the forms or send an email. I offer one final comment. We received a few forms this month with only employee numbers and no names. One or two others submitted forms with just the comments filled out. We will read these forms, but it is very difficult for us to track you down for a response. If you don't want a response, just continue to fill them out that way.

to listen, we will push it up the management ladder in the hope that someone will listen and realize we are trying to help the flight crews along with our Company. In my opinion, no other employee group is tied to the Company more than the pilot group.

Your committee is also ready to travel to quite a few of our other problem cities to get things moving. We don't want to waste our days off traveling around to different cities and then have our management do nothing with the results. That adds no credibility to your committee or our Company. We want to be taken seriously, and when we talk with a hotel we want them to know some action will be taken in short order, not in the months it now takes.

We also followed up one of our management's trips to CAE to look for a new short overnight hotel. We were given a choice of one alternate hotel, but management was not really in favor of changing from where we currently are staying. Another committee member spent a day driving around CAE and came up with four possible alternatives. We are currently awaiting replies from these hotels as to what the cost would be and if they can handle the number of rooms we are looking for. We will be presenting this information to our management at a meeting on June 30. By then, we should have some good information from the hotels we found.

Back in November, middle management asked us to submit a list of our most problematic cities, with the intention of resolving these problems. As of this writing, the Company took action on only two cities, Detroit and Tampa. When our Detroit long overnight contract expired, we succeeded by traveling to Detroit on our own to get the inspection process going.

With respect to Tampa, we are finally moving some of our long overnight crews out of the Holiday Inn Downtown. For almost a year, the Hilton in St. Petersburg solicited our business, offering a price close to that which we pay the Holiday Inn. Again, it took until May to spur our middle managers to action. We are currently splitting two crews to the Hilton in St. Petersburg. Continuing our battle with middle management, I want to move all long overnights over 15 hours to the Hilton until the contract at the Holiday Inn expires.

The reoccurring theme in these battles has two facets. One of the managers in charge of this department doesn't travel for a living, and very rarely gets out of the office to make a

decision on the hotels we must stay in while on trips. This situation is very wrong. The other problem is that the employees of the Travel Services Department are spread too thin. The creation of the Travel Services Department placed additional work upon these individuals. In addition, requiring them to buy hotel rooms the way our Purchasing Department buys durable goods adversely affects the quality of life we face on the road. I'm all for our management wanting to control costs. But we need to deal with a management group that has experience traveling for a living, and has some idea of what life is like as a crewmember. If our upper management will agree to some minor changes in the corporate structure, I think we can boost frontline employee morale, and save some money for our company. We can then complete our hotel contracts in a timely manner, and can purchase at the discount rate instead of last-minute shopping.

We are also trying to press the Dining and Cabin Services Department to follow up on the reports we send to them. These reports are used to notify Dining and Cabin Services when different stations do not have the new menus for our meals, when meals are not delivered in a timely manner, and when the catering company delivers the meals cold and expect our crews to heat them, especially on MetroJet where there are no ovens on board. If the meals are boarded while the plane is being boarded, this usually doesn't give the flight attendants a chance to eat the meal while it is hot, or before they sit for a couple of hours. This will be our biggest challenge of the crew meal program.

One side note for anyone expecting a crew meal in either SAV or PNS: The meals will now be scheduled in CLT because the catering contract in these cities has been canceled for some reason. Crew Planing is looking into trying to use the airport restaurant for our meals but hasn't come up with an answer yet as of this writing.

Thanks and have a good overnight!



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