

Pennywise and Dollar Foolish

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Chairman, Training Committee*

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As I write my first article for *US AIRWAVES* as your Training Committee Chairman, I want to take a second or two and publicly thank my predecessor, Captain (yessiree, he’s finally moved back into the left seat) Tim Baker for an outstanding job well done! I hope that the line pilots of this airline, as well as those in the Training Department, realize what this man has done to make your training environment what it is today. They say that you never know what someone else has gone through until you walk a mile in their shoes. Having been your Chairman since early February, I can assure you that I’m just now learning how to tie those size 22-EEEs that he left me. Fortunately though, he left me with an outstanding group of people on the Committee, who step up to the plate on a daily basis and ensure that your training concerns are met. A special thanks goes to Clyde Romero, who did an exceptional job as Interim Chairman, and continues to be a driving force on the Committee. And to Tim, best of luck, buddy, in your new position as First Officer Rep in Pittsburgh.

Now that Baker will have to go out and once again get re-sized for a larger Captain’s hat, let’s get down to business. Since February, I have made it a point to meet individually with Captain Ron Schilling (Director of Training), as well as each Fleet Captain and Senior Check Airman on all of our fleets. We discussed their training programs, as well as how we can work together to proactively solve any problems that

may arise. I personally feel that the relationship that this committee enjoys with the Training Department management and Check Airmen is exceptional. That being said, they also realize that we will not stand for anything less than the best training, and the best treatment for our pilots while in training. Has that been attained? No. Fortunately, with very rare exceptions, the vast majority of you are being treated as the preferred customer while in training, and we receive very few complaints in this regard. As for the former, our training within our fleets is not the best that it can be. We continue to work with Captain Schilling, the Fleet Captains, and the Senior Check Airmen to strive for the optimal programs.

This is where you guys and gals come into the picture. It seems like hardly a day or two goes by when one of us does not hear a concern or a suggestion about a program. Help us out. Drop me or one of the other committee members an e-mail (addresses can be found in the gray pages in the center of this magazine). Or fill out an ALPA critique form, and send it up to the MEC office in Pittsburgh. I know it’s a lot easier to pick up a phone and vent your frustrations or thoughts to us. That’s fine. But save some of your energy, and put it down on paper or on your computer screen. Armed with your thoughts, concerns, and suggestions, we can more effectively address the issues with the appropriate departments and hopefully come up with mutually agreed-upon solutions.

I also felt that it was imperative to meet with as many of our Check Airmen and IPs as possible. To this end, I attended all of the quarterly Check Airmen meetings for all of our fleets. I have started bringing ALPA wings to these meetings to hand out, as most of our Check Airmen and Instructors only have one pair that they normally keep on their uniforms. This has been met with great appreciation. Hopefully, we will see more of these wings of gold, which honor our brotherhood, in the halls of our training centers. Unfortunately, in future articles, it looks like I will have to refer to these meetings as semiannual instead of quarterly. It seems that the Company, in their endless cost-cutting zeal, believes that the importance of these meetings is minimal, and is therefore reducing them from four to two per year. So what? What do I, a line pilot, care about whether a Check Airman meets two, three or even 15 times per year? I'll tell you how it will affect you . . . one word, STANDARDIZATION (or the resultant forthcoming lack thereof). This situation, therefore, affects me, as well as the rest of this Committee. I have attended plenty of these meetings in the last three years, and I can honestly say that they provide an opportunity for the Fleet Captains and the Senior Check Airmen to share continuing education with their cadre. This information includes specific technical aircraft information, new curriculum and instructional development, hardware and software changes to the simulator modules, course and instructor critiques received by students (pro and con—names withheld), latest incidents or concerns industrywide, etc. Cutting these meetings from four to two per year will reduce, by at least one half, the amount of communication and information available to our Check Airmen and Instructors in a comprehensive instructional forum. This reduction in communication and understanding will effectively reduce standardization among the training staff. If we allow standardization to be reduced, then we allow our training to suffer. In a nutshell, this decision reflects the importance that the Company places on the training being conducted here at US Airways. It's a corporate slap in the face to the Director of Training, his Fleet Captains and their staff, and, ultimately and most importantly, to you and me, the line pilots of this airline.

While I'm on my soapbox, allow me to share another *outstanding* cost-cutting idea devised by our company, and also agreed to by Flight Operations management. This is the removal of

a program called I/E CQT. This acronym stands for Instructor/Evaluator Continuing Qualification Training. All of us have to undergo continuing training and evaluation every six to 12 months. Check Airmen and Instructor Pilots are no exception. They also have to take checkrides and attend recurrent ground school with the rest of us. I/E CQT was designed and developed here at US Airways as an adjunct to AQP training for the instructors. Therefore, this program was born in the B-737-300/400 program (and will continue there as they train under AQP), but received such rave reviews that Flight Training was bringing this to all of our fleets. What the heck is it? In abbreviated terms, it is recurrent training for our Check Airmen and IPs that is specific to their duties. They are required to receive both instruction and evaluation in all three seats of the simulator: left, right, and IOS (Instructor & Observer). This does add an extra day to their training footprint on an annual basis, but it is excellent training. They are evaluated not only on how they fly an ILS approach or how they handle a V-1 cut, but also on how they *teach* and *evaluate* that ILS approach and V-1 cut. Once again, better training for them equals better training for you and me. This translates to an even *safer* line operation. I might add that this was the most popular presentation at the recent ATA AQP conference in Atlanta in early May. Just about every operator and carrier in attendance, as well as the FAA, was extremely interested, and desired as much information as possible on the program. Our very own Captain George Elliott is the primary inventor and designer of I/E CQT and has been asked to chair the I/E Committee on the national level. So here we are, designing and developing an industry-leading program that revolutionizes training concepts for instructors and evaluators . . . and we're pulling the plug. Beautiful . . . just beautiful!

Has it been that many years since US Airways 5050, 1016, and 427? Can we ever forget how long and arduous a road it has been to come back since those dark days of the 1990s? Man, I hope not. I would hope we have a chance to reflect on our past and learn from our mistakes, as we have done here at US Airways. Now, I am getting the impression that this corporation is content to sit on its laurels and, in some cases, even scale back on what has worked so well for us in the past. Cost-cutting may be inevitable. However, let's not allow them to take it out of Flight Training, which in essence takes it out of

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Flight Safety. We can revisit all the history we want by watching the History Channel. We don't need to rewrite our own.

Substandards

Across the board, our Flight Training departments have some of the lowest substandard rates (2 to 3 percent) within the industry. When you consider about 6,000 pilots, of whom 250 to 500 may be in training at any given time, this statistic translates to several phone calls per week. It happens, guys. First off, it is by no means a direct reflection on the individual. You had a bad day . . . and we all have bad days. It's not the end of the world, your career, your job, or even the aircraft that you're being trained on. It is, however, time to pick up the phone and call me, or call one of your Training Committee members. We will discuss the situation with you, go over your debrief, give you an idea as to what to expect in the coming days, and coordinate with your fleet Training Department to help plan out a course of action to get you back on track. The Company, per Section 10 of the Contract, is required to notify us of every substandard event or "no recommend for a check." We receive this notification several different ways, but it is always handled with utmost confidentiality. I then try to get one of the committee members (preferably one who is cur-

rent on the same fleet) in touch with the individual to help with the debrief process and answer any questions that they may have. Unfortunately, if your phone numbers are not current with our MEC office in Pittsburgh, we may not be able to contact you. So I urge you to call the MEC office in PIT (800-872-4763) and update your current phone numbers with the receptionist. I'd also like to ask that you call one of us directly whenever you have any questions, concerns, or comments. We can't help you if we don't know about you.

As a last note, I'm humbled to be in this position, but I look forward to working with all of the other outstanding members of this committee to continue to strive toward making the training program at US Airways second to none. It won't be done overnight, I'll grant you that, but we're working on it. Keep your cards and letters coming with your thoughts and critiques. Help us help you.

Show our unity, wear your ALPA

wings in training!

