



The US Airways Pilot Selection System

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In March 1999, Captain Jerry Fenzel, Manager-Flight Operations, afforded ALPA the opportunity to view the US Airways pilot interview process. This invitation was granted for the purpose of providing ALPA an independent assessment of our selection system and for ALPA to share our findings with our members. During our review of the pilot selection process, it became apparent that this program is not just an ad hoc process, but a deliberately focused and evolving system. Perhaps one of the most revealing statements about hiring pilots at US Airways is that it is a *Pilot Selection System* with predefined expectations. It is not a pilot interview for the sake of protocol. An applicant must be successful in each phase of the process to be made a job offer.

The recruitment office defines the Pilot Selection System by dividing the evaluation task into four assessment areas. A description of these areas follows.

Assessment Area I - The Simulator Evaluation

This normally occurs the evening before the full day evaluation. It is designed to assess:

- Flying Skills
- Technical Knowledge
- Communication Resource Management

These skills are evaluated during the course of the simulator ride. Maneuvers include a reduced visibility takeoff, navigation, turns to heading, altitude and air speed changes, holding, and a reduced visibility instrument approach. Throughout the ride, the applicant is objectively assessed on a sliding scale that identifies their level of proficiency.

It is apparent that serious consideration went into the design of the sim evaluation. The applicant actually receives a welcome/sim prep package as they walk into the building. This

attention to detail continues on down to advising the applicant to fly from the seat in which they are most proficient to terminating the simulator evaluation prior to touchdown once the applicant flies into VMC. Simulator results are sent to the recruitment office for review by qualified pilot evaluators.

Assessment Areas II, III and IV - Full Day Evaluation

The full day evaluation typically occurs the morning after the simulator evaluation. The recruitment office will divide the applicants into three groups for completion of specific assessment areas. Each assessment area spans approximately two hours. Typically, applicants report to the recruitment office at 0800 and complete the full day process by 1600. A typical interview day allows for the interviewing of nine applicants. However, the office can readily increase the interview capability to 15 applicants per day.

Assessment Area II - Aptitude Testing

This assessment area consists of a series of five test batteries, which includes verbal, numeric, mechanical, abstract reasoning and spatial relations tests. Currently, these tests are in written book/answer sheet format. The long-term objective is to computerize these tests.

Assessment Area III - Computer Based Testing

This assessment area has two subtests, which have to be successfully accomplished. The first test is a personality assessment, designed to assess personality traits of the applicant. Additionally, there is the cognitive screening which assesses, among other traits, the ability of the applicant to learn and apply dual/multi-tasking functions.

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Assessment Area IV - The Personal Interview

A typical interview team consist of a Human Resource Representative and a Flight Operation Specialist. If need be, interviews can be conducted by two Flight Operation Specialists. All Flight Operations Specialist are required to attend a two-day interview training course which is administered by one of our supervisory pilots. After completing the training course, each flight operations specialist is placed under the observance and coaching of our Flight Operations Pilot Administrator.

Each interview takes approximately one and a half hours, plus an additional 20-30 minutes for setup and debriefing for the Company interviewers. Interviewers can comfortably conduct up to three interviews per day. Initially, the education and work background of the applicant is reviewed. Questions are then asked, which are structured to assess the experience of the candidate. It is very much a behavioral interview with less emphasis on the technical aspect.

However, our research indicates that we are within weeks of a technical job knowledge test being added to our interview process.

There is an obvious mix of applicants from military, commuter, and corporate aviation backgrounds. Likewise, there is a deliberate effort to vary the experience levels of the applicants, inclusive of work background, total flight time and seat-specific experience.

Each assessment area of our pilot selection system has defined gates that the applicant must successfully pass in order to be considered for employment at US Airways. There is no quota of how many can be successful on a given day or week. This is too subjective for our Company. Rather, the qualified pilot pool is adjusted by increasing or decreasing the number of interviews accomplished.

Overall, our pilot selection system is very fair and challenging. We have integrated the best of what other airlines hiring processes offer and now we are moving ahead of them into the 21st century. Accordingly, our opinion is that our system is evolving and will change over time.

The Flight Operations Department has been receptive and hospitable in sharing information and ideas back and forth with our committee. As we have learned the value of using technically skilled outside consultants in our pilot contract negotiations, our Company has elect to contract with an outside consultant who is skilled in performing job analysis and developing pilot employment selection systems for various job skills, including pilot. There appears to be a corporate commitment focused on developing a fair, effective and successful pilot selection system at US Airways. Our Company has already committed to retain the current Research Consultants through the next developmental stage of the pilot selection system.

The forthcoming validation study will look back at our selection system and suggest changes as necessary to improve on the performance and success of our pilot workforce. Although we are not the specialists in crunching numbers as these research consultants, we are pilots. Accordingly, we can offer effective feedback to the process. This is the recommendation of our committee. As the company has allowed us to graciously review the current Pilot Selection System, we do not foresee any problems with being involved in future reviews of the process.

