



# Strategic Planning Defines Our Union

By Capt. John Prater, ALPA President



**We are facing many challenges ahead of us, and one of the most daunting is mergers.** We knew this challenge would confront us—it was only a matter of time. But instead of wishing it away, we have fortified our arsenal with a new tool: our strategic plan. And since taking office as your

president, I have expanded our strategic planning efforts, which have become the very foundation of our union.

Our Board of Directors, Executive Board, Executive Council, pilot subject-matter experts, and key staff have all participated in this union-wide endeavor. At every strategic planning session, we have taken on difficult and sometimes divisive issues, including airline mergers. We have planned, and planned well, for this challenge by methodically and dispassionately analyzing each scenario to propose changes to strengthen ALPA's policies.

We have experienced everything from four-way corporate mergers at regional airlines to the mega-merger at Delta/Northwest. Each time, we have taken the lessons learned and have applied them to our constantly evolving strategic plan. And while our union leaders have learned from the past, they must be prepared to take advantage of every opportunity to improve contracts and emerge with a strengthened union—as opposed to retreating to individual corners to battle for years while management continues to enjoy cheap pilot labor. There's no denying that mergers will change the landscape of the airline industry, but we have adapted and thrived during these changing times, and we will continue to do so.

Today, United and Continental are knee-deep in merger discussions. And the breaking news that Pinnacle is buying Mesaba and Trans States is purchasing Compass has confirmed that our instincts about industry consolidation are correct. We have opened lines of communication and have built unity within our ranks to stay the course during the merger process. I believe that it's working. I have told our managements, Wall Street, and members of Congress and Parliament that pilots demand respect in future mergers, that pilots must be involved up front if a merger is to succeed, and that those managements that work with us will do better than those that fight us.

That message applies to each of us as well. As evidenced through the success of the Delta/Northwest merger and the Fee-for-Departure Carrier MEC Working Group, our U.S. and Canadian pilots are working together to secure their futures.

Now when mergers are announced, we are prepared with action plans and messages, echoing the solidarity among our pilot groups. Take the recent news regarding Pinnacle and Trans States. As you might have read in the pilot groups' coordinated press releases responding to these announcements, "Our union leaders remain optimistic that these transactions will translate into increased financial stability and greater job security." (See "As We Go To Press," page 13.) Our plans also ensure that we won't allow managements to pit pilots against each other. I am proud of these ALPA leaders. They have acted thoughtfully and swiftly to prepare for the hard work ahead regarding these corporate transactions.

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This is the kind of action that defines our union, validates our strategic plan, and illustrates why being an ALPA member definitely has its privileges.

And our union proudly, and without hesitation, continues to help furloughed members and those whose airlines have shut down or have severely decreased in size, like Aloha, ASTAR, ATA, Independence Air, Midwest, and Skyway.

By working together, we can overcome any obstacles that we encounter. Don't get me wrong, I know we still face great challenges in the airline industry, but I know that our pilot groups, both large and small, will be successful. We've provided a good start for them so they can continue working together through whatever the future may hold. I also know that these pilots will not walk that path alone. We have the support of 53,000 pilots across the U.S. and Canada. And together, We Are ALPA!