

# What Would Steve Jobs Do?

On October 5, Steve Jobs died at the age of 56. During his 35-year business career, he revolutionized not one but four industries: first, personal computers, with Apple and NeXT; second, animated movies, with Pixar; third, digital music, with the iPod; and fourth, telecommunications, with the



iPhone. I'm going to repeat that—he revolutionized not one, but *four* industries. He never took the easy path, and the word “impossible” did not enter his vocabulary. In many ways, he gave us the future by always pushing himself to perfection.

Now, looking back at his life's work, and looking at the challenges and opportunities that face the airline industry today, I asked myself, “What would Steve Jobs do?” Because let's be clear—the airline business is an industry, if ever there was one, that needs a revolution.

That change needs to start here, in North America, where our airlines are competing with countries and airlines that have state-sponsored capitalism in the form of wholly owned and integrated airlines, airplanes, and airports. Our governments must work with our airlines and their employees to allow us to compete globally and level the playing field, which is currently tilted toward the competition, particularly to some foreign airlines in the Middle East and Asia. Ask yourself, When faced with this situation, what would Steve Jobs do? Could he have invented the devices we now take for granted if his company spent more in taxes than research and development?

Clearly not, yet that's what might happen to the airline industry if the European Union's emission trading scheme is unilaterally imposed and if the Obama administration enacts new taxes on the airline industry to offset spending. This scheme would include a new \$100 departure tax on every airline departure and triple the security tax on each airline ticket purchase. Our industry is already the most highly taxed in the country—more than alcohol and tobacco, which are taxed to discourage use. Is our own government trying to discourage people from flying? Our industry contributes more than 5 percent to the gross domestic product and employs millions of Americans. As far as I'm concerned, these taxes will devastate our industry and are job killers.

Your union has been on Capitol Hill actively advocating against any new aviation taxes. The American Jobs Act was introduced in the U.S. Senate without any new aviation taxes to offset the spending in the bill. A temporary victory, but a move in the right direction. This will be a long fight as Congress looks for ways to decrease the federal budget deficit, but your union is committed to combating any proposal that could potentially

cripple our industry and is working to put in place a common-sense tax policy for airlines.

Once we level the playing field, we need to set the global standard for the next generation of air transportation. Everyone on Capitol Hill acknowledges that we need to upgrade our national airspace infrastructure, yet both parties remain deadlocked over a long-term, fully financed FAA reauthorization bill. After 22 FAA funding extensions, I can tell you that we need the leadership in our government to fund a bill that carries this industry into the future. Because right now, we are not only stuck in the past—we are falling behind.

With a level playing field and the proper tools in place, we stand a fighting chance to remain the leaders in the airline industry. But this revolution requires a coordinated plan of attack, with every ally we can rally, flying in formation. It requires leaders in our governments who are willing to protect not only the

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health of our economies, but also our jobs. It requires vision, determination, investment, and a heavy dosage of perfection. It requires a “Steve Jobs” way of thinking.

I'll conclude by telling you that ALPA is fully engaged. We have assessed our resources and charted our course appropriately. We are building a robust Government Affairs Department that will increase our presence on Capitol Hill and recruit advocates for our profession. We have coordinated with other industry partners to strengthen the airline industry in North America so that we can better compete on an international level. We've developed and continue to follow a strategic plan that will lead our Association into the future.

And today, we are challenging all airline industry players to get in the game. Perhaps we should all channel Steve Jobs and ask ourselves, “What can we do to revolutionize the airline industry?”

Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA President