

Why Pilots Choose ALPA

In my last column, I talked about how union membership among airline pilots in North America has grown while declining in other industries. This month, I'd like to expand on that and discuss some of the reasons I believe pilots actively seek union representation and, more specifically, why they choose the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l.



Pilots are problem solvers. And, as part of a flight crew, pilots are programmed to assess a situation and act decisively as a unified team. The two flight crews who will receive Superior Airmanship Awards during ALPA's Air Safety Forum in August exemplify that type of critical, coordinated effort. So it's not surprising that pilots would see the benefit of

collective engagement that a union such as the Air Line Pilots Association can provide.

Pilots are used to taking command of a situation; we are not content to just fly airplanes. We want to contribute to our airlines' success. In recent corporate transactions, ALPA pilots, through their national union, have proven to be effective partners in their airlines' success. Our message to all other industry stakeholders: constructive partnerships with ALPA pilots are crucial to achieving the full benefits of these business transactions.

The Air Line Pilots Association excels in providing for its pilots opportunities to make a lasting difference. Whether it's collaborating on scheduling issues to enhance the efficiency of flight operations while also improving pilots' work rules and quality of life or implementing safety partnership programs such as ASAP and FOQA or advancing aviation safety, there are many recent examples of ALPA pilot groups working together with their managements to achieve their mutual goals.

Inherent in both of these reasons is a third—and, I believe, the most compelling—reason that professional pilots choose the Air Line Pilots Association. Through our union, pilots experience firsthand the power of unity. When we move forward as a coordinated team, we send a persuasive message: we are organized and we are focused—we aren't going to be distracted from achieving our goals. ALPA pilots convey the message that they aren't alone, they are backed by their union—more than 53,000 pilots at 39 airlines in the United States and Canada.

Pilots are information junkies—we don't like not knowing. And, let's face it, with industry consolidation, the future holds much that is unknown. So it's understandable that in these situations, pilots might start to get frustrated and think that they could have an impact if they just did it on their own. But

I caution against thinking that way. Too often, being "independent" means being "isolated."

Several "independent" pilot unions experienced that in their contract negotiations. In both cases, they negotiated on their own until talks either stalled or broke down, underscoring how isolationism is ineffective in advancing a pilot group's goals. Ultimately, both of these independent unions turned to the Air Line Pilots Association for help. And, yes, we gave them our assistance because ALPA is dedicated to the betterment of our profession and raising the bar for *all* airline pilots.

I'm sure, too, if you ask the pilots of Canadian North, Evergreen, and Capital Cargo—all of whose independent unions merged with ALPA—they would say that the advantage in being members of the world's largest pilots union was a significant factor in their decision.

The power of unity that the Air Line Pilots Association promotes can also be seen in our affiliation with other inter-

Through our union, pilots experience firsthand the power of unity. When we move forward as a coordinated team, we send a persuasive message: we are organized and we are focused—we aren't going to be distracted from achieving our goals.

national pilot associations within the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations. We are working together to meet the challenges of today's global air transportation system. And that extends to our colleagues at the Professional Helicopter Pilots Association and Cathay, where we have entered into service agreements to assist them in reaching their goals.

For pilots in North America who don't have union representation, we offer the advantage of ALPA membership I mentioned earlier. As we go to press, the pilots of JetBlue are voting on whether to join ALPA. We hope that they see the power of unity that our Association offers.

Donald J. Moak
Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA President