

DeltaAFA Q&A For Skeptics - November 25, 2009

Questions Submitted Today By: A Skeptical Delta Flight Attendant
Answers Presented By: NWA AFA MEC President & DTW Flight Attendant Janette Rook

Q - What is being done from the AFA perspective to ensure the 01 May 2010 integration date is met? We have heard loud and clear it is management's fault at USAirways as to why they are now in their 5th year without integration. Is anyone willing to take the heat if we are not ready here at Delta?

A - As MEC President of the NWA AFA represented flight attendants; I feel it is my duty to look beyond May 1, 2010. While I appreciate and understand why Delta executives have carved this date out as a firm benchmark, I caution my fellow flight attendants to carefully consider what long term interests we might compromise if we allow short term convenience to cloud our thinking.

For example: If we can transfer into a base a month or so earlier than planned, yet the long term cost is the loss of our contractual Scope protection (resulting in a loss of 40% of flying at that base) we must ask if that was a wise choice. Likewise, if pay and benefits are unilaterally aligned by management, resulting in a continuation of Delta having the [lowest flight attendant unit costs](#) in the industry, we must ask whether a few months of negotiation with the goal of reaching an 'industry leading' contract would have been a wiser course of action.

I don't find the situation at USAirways to be particularly relevant to our merger and I'm not sure where you have heard 'loud and clear' that it's all management's fault. Unlike our merger, the pilots in the USAirways merger failed to reach agreement on seniority, which resulted in a series of cascading events (arbitration, litigation, representation election, etc...). Fortunately, that has not been the case in the Delta-NWA merger.

As a final point, it is important understand that if Delta executives are truly eager to reach their May 1, 2010 integration date, surely the fastest way to do so is to agree to conduct our election immediately under the proposed new NMB rules. After over two weeks since our joint Delta and NWA campaign leaders proposed this [opportunity](#) to Richard Anderson, we finally received a denial of the request today via a quiet posting of a letter from Mike Campbell on Deltanet.

Q - We hear a lot of promises that are being made, what concrete results have occurred in regards to the Delta-AFA campaign that will benefit us all and prepare us for integration.

A - Can you explain what 'promises' have been made? I believe the most concrete results that have taken place in our campaign (which benefit us all) have been in the area of education, understanding and knowledge of each other's culture, pay, work rules and benefits. The longer this campaign has gone on, the better understanding we have all acquired when it comes to understanding where we individually and collectively fit in the industry. The campaign has taught us to appreciate the pros and cons of many complex elements of our work lives, while illustrating that together, [we lag far behind the industry](#) and deserve vast improvements if we are to be called World Class Delta Flight Attendants.

Q - Why should we trust anything AFA and it's elected and volunteer activists say, correct me if I am wrong, but did we not hear that a vote would take place after the NMB name plates on the doors had changed? And now the entire workings of a "new way to" vote is in the process and we are delayed even further?

A - Whether FAs choose to trust their flying partners or our [corporate executives](#) is entirely up to them and their individual value system. In the best of times, I would propose that it's a false choice - as having good leaders within our union and within our airline is always the preferred situation. However, in the current situation, I believe this is a no-brainer. Just a few short years ago our executives ([many of whom](#) have top leadership positions at the new Delta) presided over a large push to outsource jobs - including plans to outsource 40% of our flight attendant positions at NWA.

While they say they want our election conducted ASAP, they have today denied [our request](#) to move forward with an immediate election. Our motives (as flight attendants) are simple; we want an immediate election ([under fair rules](#)) and we want to protect and advance our profession. You must ask yourself what motives our executives have - and why obstructing our ability to have a legal contract is inconsistent with their future business plans.

Q - What is the price we all should have to pay to have to be represented by AFA? Many have moved, uprooted their lives made financial and physical changes to adapt to this merger. We have heard over the course of this merger, "what is the rush?" Well now we are getting ready for our S.O.C. and the integration date. If this vote or "new" contract does not appear before 01 May 2010 it looks like many who have moved on with their life to enjoy the benefits of this merger may have to back track and start at ground zero again. Is that fair, how is that representation in the best interest of members? Should a union not unify and support its members and make life easier?

A - Please see my response to the first question above.

Q - Do you believe if the voting rules are changed to a yes/no vote AFA will have any real clout on the property or will we continue to see the spin cycle? If this vote changes will the support within our ranks be there to truly be unified and have any leverage what so ever? Or will it be weak and ineffective?

A - That is a great question. As an optimistic person, I believe that if we win the upcoming representation election, most flight attendants who currently oppose having a legal voice on the job will understand the inherent benefit of supporting any effort that is designed to increase our pay, benefits, levels of job security and improve our work rules. I believe most flight attendants possess the ability to move past the decision to have a legal voice and will do their part to make sure we succeed in becoming World Class Delta Flight Attendants.

Q - If the voting rules change to yes/no, do you not feel the de-certification process should be the exactly the same?

A - As a NWA flight attendant who has lived through two changes in representation just like you, I believe the de-certification process already is exactly the same. During both of our recent representation election, we had the opportunity to choose to be unrepresented and chose representation.

Q - How exactly was the C3 put into place and what qualifications were needed?

A - I can't speak for the process that Delta campaign activists used in selecting their designees to the C3 Committee. On the NWA side of the campaign, the NWA MEC sought flight attendants who possessed some or all of the following;

- ✘ Experience with former representation campaigns - including an understanding of campaign structure under the Mobilization Model of organizing.**
- ✘ Prior experience in the development and distribution of campaign material.**

- ✘ **Fundamental experience or understanding of the AFA structure – including former union experience as an officer, negotiations committee member or base representation.**
- ✘ **A sincere willingness to learn about our Delta counterparts - their history, work rules, culture and past organizing attempts.**

Q - If you know people on the C3 and/or have worked with them, would you have voted them into a position that may or may not mold your careers for years to come?

A - Your question seems to imply that C3 members have a greater power than they have. Members of the C3 are responsible to design and run our joint representation campaign. They are not responsible for the development of contract proposals, policies or issues that may "mold our careers" for years to come. That responsibility would rest in the hands of all elected Local Presidents (at each DL & NW base) from [our combined Delta-AFA system](#), with the help of a Delta and NWA Negotiations Committee.

Q - Part of being an effective leader and respected is to own your mistakes in life, God knows I have and do. What mistakes have been made in this campaign and can anything be done to correct them?

A - Perhaps one mistake made early in the campaign (at least on the NWA side) was an overly eager attempt to get out into the field and talk to our Delta counterparts about AFA and our advocacy for having a legal contract, before taking the time to appreciate and understand the Delta culture and how management's anti-union advisors have wielded that culture to confuse and mislead some flight attendants about what a union really is. We may have avoided some early 'bumps in the road', had we first taken the time to fully brief our NWA flying partners on what to expect when they volunteered for visibility efforts in places like the ATL airport. Fortunately, things have a way of self-correcting themselves in a democratic campaign and Delta flight attendants have done a remarkable job helping us understand and appreciate that what works in Detroit and Minneapolis with our co-workers may not resonate so well in Atlanta or elsewhere.

Q - If you personally believe in representation, do you feel AFA would be the best for OUR careers and OUR company? What is AFA's financial standing? How effective is AFA at other carriers it represents. Do the promises made match the product delivered?

A - Yes, I believe [AFA](#) is best for our career and best for our company. AFA is as effective as the individual flight attendants at a particular carrier will have it be. The 'organization' itself does not necessarily make promises (beyond the guarantees that the constitution, bylaws or labor law can guarantee). Mostly, AFA promises each of us the ability to elect the best leaders we can, the ability to vote on our contract and the ability to be part of the negotiations itself. Our union is not some separate entity in a building across the street or some vending machine in which we put money into it and kick it to make it produce something. Rather, AFA is [each and every one of us](#)...collectively making decisions about our profession.

For example, if you refuse to accept a contract without industry leading pay - that is a 'promise' you make to yourself - the organization doesn't make it - you do. And you keep that promise to yourself by electing peers who share that goal and by not voting on a contract that fails to reach your promise to yourself. So, when asking questions like the one you pose above, I invite you to replace the word "AFA" with "I" "me" or "myself" and see how it changes the meaning of your question.

Q - What is the AFA's reason as to why the recent grievance of LOA 35 was lost and that the contract language was not strong enough to win the grievance?

A - Please see our response to this issue on www.nwaafa.org and in Friday's MEC Hotline. As President Obama said; "Making your mark on the world is hard. If it were easy, everybody would do it. But it's not. It takes patience, it takes commitment, and it comes with plenty of failure along the way. The real test is not whether you avoid this failure, because you won't. It's whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it; whether you choose to persevere."

Q - What is different about the SCOPE language with Midwest Airlines? That legally the same thing could not happen at Delta with the Northwest Flight Attendants? (I said legally, did not say it will happen or even would, not even a rumor.)

A – As I do not know the details of every contract for all the flight attendants that AFA represents, I requested an answer for you from AFA Legal.

From Ed Gilmartin, AFA General Counsel:

AFA filed a grievance over the scope/successorship provisions of the Midwest-AFA CBA that were violated when Republic purchased Midwest in July 2009 but did not assume the CBA nor use the Midwest flight attendants for the flights Republic is now flying under the Midwest name.

The arbitration was conducted on November 7, with one additional witness to testify on the Company's behalf. AFA is seeking as a remedy a finding that Republic must use the Midwest flight attendants as represented by AFA for all Midwest-designated flights.

The Midwest Scope provision is different than the NWA scope in numerous ways. But the most salient difference is that the Midwest scope has a huge exception that allows Midwest to "code share" some of its flying to other companies. Though AFA disagreed with an earlier arbitration finding on this issue, nonetheless it was interpreted by an arbitrator as allowing Midwest to give away most of its flying to Republic. After taking most of the flying, Republic sealed the deal and purchased Midwest outright.

In summary, the NWA scope is much stronger than Midwest's.

Q - If the AFA Constitution can be changed to allow Pat Friend to stay on as President while not being a flight attendant, why could AFA not meet with Delta to secure our seniority? Seniority is the number 1 issue for flight attendants world wide. (WE THINK)

A - At the time of Pat Friend's election as International President she was (by all definitions) a United flight attendant. There has been no change that I'm aware of in the AFA-CWA Constitution & Bylaws regarding an International Officer's ability to complete his/her term of office. While challenging her decision to accept an Early Out Retirement may very well be an entertaining subject for political discord, the fact is that her decision saved the job of a junior United FA. Had she not done this, I have little doubt that she would be equally criticized by those looking for any reason to be critical. Whether Pat submitted her request to retire this year or in the last year of our current term has no other impact - beyond saving the job of one United FA.

I'm not sure how this is connected to Pat; however you asked why our Northwest AFA Seniority Committee did not meet with Delta. I hope the below information not only explains our position, but more importantly, I hope it illustrates how Delta executives (mostly comprised of our former NWA executives) are trying to usurp

our collective bargaining power and deny us the ability to achieve an industry leading contract for flight attendants at the world's largest airline.

Delta executives tried to move the issue of seniority integration to the front burner in direct conflict with the process typically used in our industry. The process used in our industry calls for specific steps which (historically) look like this:

- **Resolve representation issue between the combined groups (if one exists).**
- **Negotiate a combined contract (typically 'transition agreement' remains in place during the negotiations process; keeping the workers separate until a combined contract is reached).**
- **After a contract is reached, the employees' union then hands management a combined seniority list, which the members resolved without interference by management.**

The reason this process of steps is important is because it gives us, as employees, leverage to get the best possible contract before we turn our combined seniority list over to management for them to integrate operations. For example, we only need to look at the recent contract reached by the ALPA represented pilots at the NEW Delta to see how well it worked for them. Keep in mind that the DAL/NWA pilots did not have to contend with the first step above ("Resolve representation issue...") as both groups already were represented by the same union. The fact that it only took a few months for the pilots to reach a contract should tell you how important this leverage actually was to their negotiations; their seniority issues were resolved after their deal was reached. I believe we deserve the same opportunity.

Having explained this, we do not dismiss the work that the Delta Seniority Integration Committee has done and we are pleased that it appears their position is consistent with the 'date-of-hire' policy that we maintain in our AFA Constitution. We view this as a positive step and we relayed that in a message to Mark Clarke, Chair of the Delta SIC. On the other hand, we were disappointed in the anti-union statements put out by Joanne Smith in which she perpetuates the myth that we are somehow not interested in working with our counterparts at Delta. Nothing could be further from the truth.

While our seniority is vitally important, seniority means little without an enforceable contract. In our NWA contract, the word seniority appears 351 times and each time that word appears, the language surrounding it is legal and enforceable. Industry leading pay, benefits, pension, and job protections are just as important to each of us as our seniority. A seniority number does not help us in the unemployment line, when we pay our mortgage, when we require medical treatment, or when we are planning our retirement. It is important for us to remember this when our executives try to take our attention away from our goal of obtaining the best possible flight attendant contract.

We applaud our flying partners at Delta who have worked on their recommendation for 'date of hire' seniority integration, and look forward to working with them as one great global airline. Most importantly, we look forward to working together to raise the bar to industry leading levels of pay, benefits, and job security.

Q - What parts of the active campaign do you feel have been Pro Delta?

A – I believe Delta Air Lines is us, it is not some couch from the 1960's that we can't sit on without a plastic cover. Over half of our combined group now favors representation and we strongly believe that our active engagement to achieve a legally binding voice at our company is Pro Delta and it's good for our company and our career. Our [executives come and go](#), but we employees remain at its heart and

we will work hard to ensure a bright future for ourselves and our company. Our campaign has provided a great deal of educational material for all of us about our company and has provided an excellent opportunity for us to understand and bring together each others' unique cultures. We are in the process of building an even stronger Delta together, one where we hope flight attendants have a legal contract where we have the chance to define our own priorities, just like our pilots and executives have.

Q - Is your life better off today in regards to work, than it was a year ago and if you say better, is it because of the actions of AFA or Delta?

A - My job is better today because of AFA for numerous reasons. I would propose that all flight attendants, whether union or non-union, whether male or female, married, have children, have any form of retirement plan, duty rigs, medical benefits, etc... are better off because of the work that AFA has done. Closer to home, NWA flight attendants like myself in the bottom 40% of our seniority list have our jobs today because of the clout AFA has on [Capitol Hill](#). While I am excited by the opportunities that this merger may provide to all 21,000 of us, I believe it will take a strong, legal voice to maximize those opportunities.

Q - Who are all of these people and what are their accomplishments/qualifications ?
Members of the C3:

Rebecca Collier,
Northwest Airlines
rcollier@nwaafa.org

A - Rebecca is a MSP based FA with experience as an LEC officer and vast experience in participating in campaign work.

Susan Squiers,
Northwest Airlines
smsquires@mac.com

A - Susan is a MSP based FA who has lived thru several mergers (North Central, Republic, Northwest and now Delta). Susan has vast experience as an LEC officer, participating in past campaigns and in the development and distribution of union communications.

Sherry Eubanks,
Northwest Airlines
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A - Sherry is a NYC based FA with experience as an LEC officer and vast experience in participating in campaign work.

Rich Stone,
Northwest Airlines
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A - Rich is a HNL based FA with past experience as an LEC officer, former negotiations committee member and in the participation of campaign work.

Thanks for taking the time to ask these questions and to read the answers. - Janette