



Where Do We Go from Here?

From time to time, it's necessary to look in the mirror and remind ourselves of the type of carrier we are. While some other carriers may tinker with wild ideas and try to reinvent themselves, I believe we are best served when we play to our strengths and focus on what we do best.

The fact is that we are a network carrier and we're going to continue to be a network carrier. Our customers value the breadth of our network, the frequencies of flights and the benefits that come along with being an AAdvantage member. Being a global airline requires that you operate different fleet types, maintain a hub and spoke system, build strong alliances with other carriers and work as hard as you can to attract and keep loyal customers.

But that doesn't mean that American is simply sitting put and is satisfied with our position. We've all worked very hard to cut costs, introduce more efficient processes, keep our passengers safe and satisfied and beat the competition. Every successful business I know does the same thing – adapt to economic circumstances, keep a close eye on customer preferences and stay closely attuned to what is happening in its industry.

So when I hear people say that we need to have a plan to move forward, I say we do have a plan and we're in the process of executing it on a daily basis. Maybe it's not as sexy as some would like. Maybe some are expecting a magic formula to be unveiled that instantly resolves all the challenges ahead. But that's not how we are going to move this airline and our careers forward.

A few weeks ago, CEO Gerard Arpey told employees at the Fall Leadership Conference that it's time to shift our thinking from survival to success and introduced FlightPlan 2020. What FlightPlan 2020 says is that we understand who we are as a carrier, we know what it's going to take to succeed and now it's time to start capitalizing on the opportunities ahead. To me, the components of the plan are the guiding principles by which just about any decision can be put against. Are we doing the right things to earn customer loyalty? Are we investing in the right mix of products and services to enhance our competitive position? Do we have the ability to make routes profitable? Are we offering competitive pay and benefits that make this airline a good place to work?

I won't spend time repeating the entire framework here because I know a lot of pilots have looked at the information the company has put out. I've heard positive feedback from many of you and I'm very encouraged by discussions I've engaged in. For pilots that haven't had a chance to review it, I hope you'll give it a close look. It's a realistic road map for the months and years ahead that focuses on substance over showmanship.

So from my perspective, we still have a lot of hard work ahead, but there is reason for optimism. That's certainly not the stuff of rallying cries, bumper stickers and billboards. But I believe it's an honest and rational assessment of where we are and how best to move ahead. And that's the approach we'll continue to bring to the bargaining table – looking objectively at the issues at hand and offering to discuss how we can work collectively with APA negotiators to solve them.

Strength and Honor,

Captain John Hale
HaleComments@aa.com