



ALPAWatch 2009 Candidate Questionnaire

1. Do you have any prior ALPA experience? If so, what positions did you (do you) hold and when?

Answer:

Small Jet Study Group – TWA, 97'
Strike Center Volunteer DTW 98' – NWA (and all subsequent)
Web Board manager 00' - 04' ?
Chairman Information Systems Cmte ~03-05'
Chairman Membership Cmte ~06-08'

2. Almost every pilot at this airline is flying more and has less time at home. Why are you volunteering even more of your time and effort for ALPA work?

Answer:

Someone has to do it, and I have always been active in the union in some form, from elected positions to actively participating in LEC affairs, meetings, writing resolutions, etc. Many people complain about ALPA, but not enough put in their time to improve things. It's our union, and it's only as good as we make it.

As an LEC Representative, you will have a dual representative responsibility. You will represent the pilots in your base, but your votes also affect the entire pilot group. When there is a conflict between the needs of these two groups, explain how your vote would be weighted, more towards the pilots in your base or more towards the pilot group as a whole.

Answer:

We do not do the pilots business in a vacuum of our LEC only – every action that improves the QOL for C20 pilots improves it for the entire pilot group and vice-versa. Most of the issues that face us cross the boundaries of a given council, and as the second largest base in the DAL system we represent everyone from the most junior to senior pilot on the list.

That said, there are some issues particularly important to C20 as we have a very high percentage of commuters, and improving the DAL rules on call-in-honest and JS are a high priority.

It is important to reiterate the fact that no matter the issue before us in any N vs. S points of view, we no longer have either the senatorial or the roll call numbers to force anything. We must play well in the sand box with our colleagues, and get policies changed and contractual language improved by the strength of our arguments and powers of persuasion.

3. Do you believe pilot unity is important? If so, how will you promote pilot unity at your base? Within the Delta pilot group as a whole?

Answer:

Unity is vitally important, but not at the cost of failing to ask the hard questions or engage in lively and spirited debate. The worst hits we have taken as a pilot group since the Restructuring Agreement have been the “Oh-by-the-ways” and “We didn’t think they’d do that” oversights because we failed to be tough enough in vetting and scrutinizing certain premises made during the BK. Our desire to embrace unity above keeping an objective eye on the ball cost us dearly.

Unfortunately in the past (and occasionally present) we confuse unity and unanimity, and deliberately duck vital but controversial topics whose discussion causes that necessary (public) debate in the misguided name of maintaining unity. Unity in and of itself is not the Holy Grail. Making the best possible decision for the pilot group is. If reaching the best decision is occasionally messy and uncomfortable so be it.

In the past those whose positions or agendas may be have been threatened by the open discussion would cry “you are causing disunity” as a defense. This is disingenuous and intellectually dishonest in my opinion. Any policy or contractual change we make deserves no less than an unbiased critical peer review – if it’s a good idea it will stand up to intense scrutiny. Far better this than after the fact remorse for unanimous decisions.

4. Candidates frequently say they want to improve MEC Communications. What is right and wrong with our communications and what would you do to correct the deficiencies? Do you think we need more transparency in ALPA’s day-to-day business? If so, how might this be accomplished and how and why would more openness be important?

Answer:

We absolutely need more transparency and improved communications. We do an excellent job of communicating polices that have been decided for us, frequently for things that many line pilots were not even aware were under discussion.

We have done a less than stellar job of engaging the pilots and listening to their inputs or letting them know a contentious issue was even being discussed. Obviously we cannot put every piece of MEC business up for MEMRAT, but at the same time we can do far better in communicating, which by definition means exchange, 2-way discussion.

Frequently even the Reps are not aware of the direction of decisions being made on the MEC until presented in session for a vote, and when I hear comments (like I did under our previous administration) that the Reps got more information from line pilots than the MEC we have a problem.

Our MEC is supposed to be a bottom up organization, but frequently does not operate that way. This needs to change, but also requires far more participation and interest from the line pilots.

Regarding LEC communications I think C20 has been a leader and has frequently been ahead of the MEC in communicating issues to the pilots in this regard. They have done a fantastic job, and I have some big shoes to fill to continue this legacy.

5. Explain your position regarding the current Scope clause on our PWA. What do you think we need to do to improve our Scope protections and recover some of the lost flying to DCI's?

Answer:

We, along with most other legacy carriers lost a lot of ground in Ch11 and are realizing we went too far. Our previous BK negotiators, which includes one of the current F/O candidates, made assumptions and assurances over the protection of our Scope that have proven disastrously false, and in retrospect we should have known better. We cannot afford to repeat those mistakes, and we must look to recapture flying where the opportunity presents itself.

We cannot simply “take it back” as some might advocate. We have agreements in place that are legally binding. What we can do is capitalize on opportunities to tighten Scope as they materialize. If management decides to shift flying back towards the mainline consistent with their Air Services Agreements (and expirations) we need to codify that shift so it cannot backslide again or be used to whipsaw us.

We need to continue to engage the DCI pilots so as to improve flow through agreements to provide opportunities to their pilots, especially as they may lose flying as result of management’s current direction regarding DCI flying. The best career enhancement a DCI pilot can have is mainline growth and an opportunity to fly there.

It goes without saying I will not support *any* additional relaxation of Scope regardless of the supposed quids.

Not one more pound, seat, or aircraft.

6. As the biggest pilot group in ALPA do you think that puts DAL ALPA in a leadership position for all ALPA pilots when it comes to returning this profession to place of prominence? If yes, is there a road map to return this profession to

what it needs to be? What does that road map look like and if you are not aware of such a road map, what do you think it should look like.

Answer:

DALPA does have a leadership role in ALPA National, and I think we are using it and we are being listened to. The best road map we can provide is to set the bar high for others to follow in pattern bargaining. Going from “worst to first” in innovative Scope solutions would be a big start. The legacy of the relationship that the former NWA MEC had with its feeder affiliates was an industry paradigm breaker that needs to be nurtured and developed at DAL. We can work together successfully with our DCI’s to promote our respective careers while protecting and enhancing mainline Scope protection. Mainline growth is good for everyone, including our affiliates also represented by National

7. Please list in order of importance your first 3 items of business if elected to C20 LEC Office.

Answer:

- 1) Actively engage with all the other DTW LEC Reps (and other councils) to develop working relationships’ so I can hit the ground running as part of a fully operating team when my term begins. We have too much work to do to waste time getting “spun up” or make mistakes while we are learning.
 - 2) Become an expert in the PWA and DAL procedures so I can answer your questions accurately and engage with the company if I have to represent you in the event of an incident or disciplinary action.
 - 3) Develop together with the other elected Reps a list of priorities for C20 and the DAL pilots and work up a strategy and plan of action of how and when we are going to work towards accomplishing those items.
8. What do you think the primary responsibilities are for the position you are seeking? How do those responsibilities relate to the everyday line pilot?

Answer:

First is to represent you, the line pilot on a day to day basis with the inevitable and occasionally unforeseen issues that arise in our professional lives. I see the bulk of work a Rep does as this behind the scenes, day to day running of interference and helping individual pilots.

Secondly is the representation of your interests on the MEC to protect, preserve, and enhance our collective careers. The MEC mission statement sums it up:

“To reverse the decline, stabilize and improve the pay, working conditions, retirement, benefits and job security of the Delta Pilots; to always be mindful of Safety and Security.”
