

Turning Points

ALPA plans strategically to tackle the big jobs

By Molly Martin, Media Specialist

Two years have passed since ALPA's Board of Directors last met. Since that time, ALPA leaders, line pilots, and staff have worked on thousands of projects, big and small. Those efforts have touched nearly all aspects of the professional lives of the Association's members.

Lost among the busyness of the union, it is sometimes hard to see how the strategic planning model ALPA employs works on a daily basis. But studying the Association's measured approach on three critical issues—CrewPASS, collective bargaining, and the challenges of skyrocketing fuel costs—shows it works.

Before pilots step into the cockpit, they review and understand the flight plan. The pilot-in-command, along with the crew, evaluates and makes decisions on a number of factors. So it is natural that those same pilots—as union leaders—go about problem-solving outside the cockpit using the same techniques and energy: visualizing the route, assigning tasks, and benchmarking progress.

When it comes to charting ALPA's course, pilot leaders use these same principles. Their flight plan comes in the form of mission and vision statements; goals are defined, tasks are assigned, participants are held accountable, and progress is measured.

Opportunities for and obstacles to goal completion always exist, but here are a few examples of this process at work.

CrewPASS

First stop: CrewPASS. This saga certainly fits the pilot problem-solving mold. ALPA members instructed the Board of Directors to make airport security screening a top priority at its October 2006 meeting. And 2 years later, from challenge to implementation, CrewPASS enables pilots traveling through demonstration airports to be treated with dignity, while improving the overall efficiency of the screening process.

ALPA pilot representatives developed the CrewPASS concept in early 2007 to harness the proven technology of the Cockpit Access Security System (CASS), which can access a database of

flightcrew ID photos in real time.

In May 2007, Capt. John Prater, the union's president, and members of ALPA's National Security

Committee became the program's biggest advocates, using its CrewPASS white paper to promote the program with the head of the U.S. Transportation Security Administration, Kip Hawley, his staff, and members of the U.S. Congress.

By July, Congress had passed a bill (H.R.1) to implement recommendations of the 9/11 >>>

The strategic planning model
ALPA employs works on a daily basis. The examples in this article on ALPA's approach to three critical issues show how it works.



In March 2008, ALPA pilots conducted informational picketing for CrewPASS in front of the Transportation Security Administration's Arlington, Va., headquarters, drawing the attention of TSA Administrator Kip Hawley, right, who came out in the rain to talk with Capt. Prater.

Commission, which included an ALPA-recommended provision that required the TSA to establish a process that would give flightcrew members expedited airport access through screening checkpoints.

When H.R.1 became law on Aug. 3, 2007, it triggered a 180-day countdown for the TSA to consult with airlines, airports, and ALPA on how to improve airport access. ALPA, thanks to its long and productive history of working with federal agencies on numerous issues, led the charge for the pilots' solution with multiple meetings, letters, and phone calls.

When the TSA missed the deadline, however, ALPA turned up the heat. On the morning of March 19, 2008, ALPA ran a full-page ad in *USA Today*, detailing pilots' trusted role in improving safety and security in the sky. Later that day, pilots from more than 12 ALPA pilot groups conducted informational picketing at DCA and in front of TSA headquarters. They were joined by Prater, other national officers, and the executive vice-presidents.

The demonstration caused Administrator Hawley to walk out of TSA headquarters into the pouring rain to visit with the pilots and speak privately with Prater. This turning point propelled ALPA's proposal to the top of the TSA's agenda.

Over the next 3 months, TSA and ARINC, the TSA's contractor for CrewPASS, partnered with ALPA to develop a CrewPASS evaluation program, which launched on July 17 at BWI, PIT, and CAE. To date, more than 20,000 pilots have passed through security in seconds, not minutes, thanks to ALPA and its pilot leaders. All reports indicate that the program is flying high with pilots, the TSA, and other stakeholders. In fact, as *Air Line Pilot* went to press, the TSA announced that it will extend the test program for another 180 days.

Negotiating favorable contract patterns

As the bankruptcy era wound down in 2005, ALPA leaders, pilot negotiators, and professional negotiating staff were already strategically planning for recovery from unfavorable contract patterns negotiated since 2001.

Unlike previous negotiating cycles when favorable contract patterns were set at financially strong airlines, ALPA was forced into bargaining with weak airlines first when US Airways and United filed bankruptcy, and with subsequent filings by Delta, Northwest, Aloha, ATA, and other airlines. Pilots faced additional hurdles under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code's shortened time line for negotiations, by the uneven playing field

through management's aggressive use of Section 1113, and by the courts' decisions to eliminate employees' right to strike.

As in other areas, ALPA anticipated the ways in which the airline industry and the negotiating environment could change; set goals in cornerstone contract areas; convened meetings of ALPA and non-ALPA pilot groups to discuss pattern bargaining strategy, collective wage and benefit targets, and building consensus; and then got busy executing the plan—with positive results.

ALPA understood that *this* negotiating cycle—unlike the bankruptcy-era cycle—would provide different bargaining openings and the chance to set more favorable patterns. First, there were regular

ALPA Pilots Decide on ALPA Issues



he 42nd ALPA Board of Directors meeting will focus on strategic planning for ALPA's future.

BOD members will review union structure and ALPA resources; collective bargaining; safety, security, and flight time/duty time issues; communications and legislation; membership and organizing; and international topics, along with the various other agenda issues to be discussed. Action items will come in the form of resolutions, which BOD members will act on to determine the Association's course.

Deciphering the significance of the resolutions before the BOD requires a thorough understanding of ALPA's structure of governance as outlined in the Association's Constitution and By-Laws. It's clear by reading this document that the true decision-making power at ALPA rests with the individual member.

An ALPA-represented pilot belongs to a local council based on his or her base assignment or other similar criterion (block representation). Within this foundation of Association authority, local council meetings are to be held every 4 months to conduct local council business and to hear the interests, problems, and priorities of the line pilot. This exchange is the seed that germinates to become ALPA policy.

Pilots elect local council status representatives (captain reps, first officer reps, and, where appropriate, second officer reps) or seniority block representatives to act on behalf of the local council members for all Association matters. Local council representatives hold 3-year terms and may also serve as the local council's chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary/ treasurer. These elected officials make up the local executive council (LEC).

Local council status or seniority block representatives serve as members of the master executive council (MEC), the highest governing body for a pilot group. They conduct the business for the member pilots of an airline,

To advance its strategic objectives, ALPA convened industry participants, supplied the strength of its Strategic Preparedness and Strike Committee to get members active,



and forcefully applied staff and financial resources to each negotiating “flight.”

Section 6 contract re-opens that would start with financially strong airlines like Alaska, Continental, and Hawaiian rather than weaker airlines. Second, company needs would cause management to seek letters of agreement (LOAs) that pilots could use to repair contracts. And third, imminent industry

consolidation would provide opportunities to bargain new single agreements much sooner than the contract duration clause originally provided.

The first major Section 6 contract completed in the post-bankruptcy bargaining cycle was FedEx's. Pay, retirement, retiree

medical benefits, work rules, and scope were all improved substantially and set the bar for new contract patterns. Pilot contracts that followed FedEx—ASTAR, Ryan, and UPS—all included pay increases, scheduling improvements, job security enhancements, and in some cases, health and retirement benefit gains. Contracts in the fee-for-departure segment likewise support ALPA's strategy. After 5 years of negotiating, Atlantic Southeast pilots ratified a new contract in November 2007 that improves wages, work rules, job protections, and scheduling. Like the FedEx contract, the Atlantic Southeast contract and the one now being negotiated at Pinnacle shore up favorable contract patterns ►►

As ALPA BOD members convene for the 42nd time, keep in mind that your local council representative is there, representing your interests before the entire Association.

meeting at least twice a year and electing a chairman, vice-chairman, and a secretary/treasurer. Within the confines of the Constitution and By-Laws, the MEC members determine how the MEC will function and rely on line-pilot input to set collective bargaining goals.

In addition to their role as MEC members, local council status or seniority block representatives serve as members of the highest and final governing body of ALPA, the ALPA Board of Directors. The BOD meets biennially, sets Association policy, and is the only governing body that can make changes to ALPA's Constitution and By-Laws. It also elects the union's

four national officers—the president, the first vice-president, the vice-president-administration/secretary, and the vice-president-finance/treasurer.

Note that local council status reps—the individuals who determine ALPA's course and choose its national officers—are the same officials who members elect to represent line-pilot interests. ALPA pilots are never more than one step away from Association policy-making—and one election away from policy decision-making, if they opt to run for office.

Other ALPA governing bodies include the Executive Council, made up of the Association's four national officers and 10 executive vice-presidents, who represent pilot groups based on numbers of their members or their projected annualized dues income. The Executive Council meets at least six times a year and serves as the union's trustees of ALPA's funds and its business. In addition, ALPA use an Executive Board made up of MEC chairmen and members of the Executive Council (the latter of which serve as ex-officio members). The Executive

Board meets twice annually (spring and fall), governing between BOD meetings and responding to general business demands.

However, it's the line pilot's relationship with the local council representative and the flexibility and autonomy pilot groups have that give the Association its unique framework. Pilots decide the direction of their union—not business agents, national officers, or staff members.

As ALPA BOD members convene for the 42nd time, keep in mind that your local council representative is there, representing your interests before the entire Association. The agenda items the BOD will address all begin with a line pilot who has a suggestion, idea, or question. Therefore, ALPA's ability to represent your priorities depends upon you making a call, sending an e-mail, having a conversation, taking an interest.... ALPA is as proactive as its members make it. A famous labor adage suggests that managements get the unions they deserve. Perhaps union members do, too. 🌀

for pilots flying similar-sized equipment.

The “hitting singles and doubles” portion of ALPA’s strategic plan—that is, negotiating multiple letters of agreement that improve contracts a little bit each time rather than waiting for Section 6 negotiations—strongly moved forward during the early parts of the post-bankruptcy period. LOAs at United include improvements in long call/short call and days off for reserves, along with work-rule enhancements on the narrowbody fleet. Northwest pilots increased deadhead pay from 50 percent to 100 percent and negotiated premium pay for hours over 80. Delta pilots also saw improvements as well.

And 2 years into ALPA’s strategic bargaining plan, the third leg of the strategy has produced well-documented and substantial gains for Delta and Northwest pilots in their new, single agreement. Among the gains: compounded raises of more than 18 percent over the life of the agreement; an additional 3 percent in DC contributions for a Defined Contribution Plan percentage of 14 percent beginning on Jan. 1, 2012; and all pilots receive equity in the new Delta Air Lines following the close of the merger. Additionally, there are improvements to scope, furlough protection, international pay, per diem, sick leave, premium pay, reserve, and other quality-of-life issues.

Parenthetically, very substantial contract gains—including more vacation, more days off, improved duty rigs, and premium pay—had already been negotiated for pilots at US Airways. More improvements were easily achievable in the final economic package when East pilots, upset over their seniority integration decision, initiated a representation election to replace ALPA with their own in-house representative. Based on their



Capt. Dave Stevens, Northwest MEC chairman, has been a key leader in ALPA’s strategic effort to ensure that pilots play a pivotal role in any corporate transaction.

current lack of resources, internal division, and the slow pace of negotiations with management, it may be a long time before US Airways pilots participate in the improved contract pattern.

While the strategic plan is essential, just like flying, goal comple-

tion doesn’t happen without careful execution. To advance its strategic objectives, ALPA convened industry participants, supplied the strength of its Strategic Preparedness and Strike Committee to get members active, and forcefully applied staff and financial resources to each negotiating “flight.”

As earlier indicated, fuel prices and economic turbulence have buffeted the negotiating plan. But the progress in the new bargaining cycle is unmistakable and continuing.

Energy reform

Everyone knows by now, as jet fuel goes, so goes the airline industry. And as we are all learning, the environmental debate is having a direct influence on the future of the industry as well. Given those factors, ALPA leaders could not sit on the sidelines in the growing debate over the future of fossil fuels.

By cultivating long-term, collaborative relationships with government officials who sit at the controls of this highly regulated profession, ALPA represents pilot interests by protecting



On June 26, Capt. Rice, ALPA’s first vice-president, urged members of Congress to swiftly develop a U.S. national energy policy and put an end to the energy market speculation that is irrationally driving up the cost of oil.



On July 11, Capt. Prater participated in a morning press event at the National Press Club with other organizations to form the StopOilSpeculationNow Coalition, whose mission is to materially reduce the unnecessarily high energy prices.

members' jobs, benefits, safety, and security. That eternal protector role, with the mission to build a better profession, varies with the elected pilot leaders and the direction they receive from line pilot representatives.

In the past 2 years, ALPA representatives testifying on the union's behalf have covered all of the hot-button issues: FAA operations and safety programs, pension protection policies, the NTSB's Most Wanted aviation safety improvements, bankruptcy reform, aviation security improvements, aviation safety reporting programs, aviation and the environment, excessive speculation on commodity trading and its effect on oil prices, cargo security, the DHL/UPS proposal and its effect on competition, and runway safety.

While most of these issues are never-ending because there's always room to improve aviation safety and security, some issues have jumped to the top of the Association's priorities list. And ALPA intends to always be *the acknowledged voice* on all issues

that matter to its members.

Take the record-high, irrational oil prices that are smothering the American economy, for example. ALPA pilot leaders called "mayday" on this issue when the price of jet fuel forced the airline industry—and its employees—to cut capacity, furlough pilots, or go out of business altogether.

On June 11, ALPA joined forces with 38 other organizations to form the StopOilSpeculationNow Coalition, whose mission is to materially reduce the unnecessarily high energy prices by addressing runaway oil speculation and empowering industry, labor, and consumer groups with short-, mid-, and long-term solutions. Starting with the short term, the Coalition called on its members to pressure Congress to reform U.S. commodities trading regulations.

By June 20, and after millions of e-mails from the Coalition's membership—including those that thousands of ALPA members sent—Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Mich.) and more than 40 members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced legislation to address the

problem of out-of-control speculation in the energy commodity futures market.

A month later, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) introduced the Stop Excessive Speculation Act of 2008 (S.3268), and ALPA spent the month of August advocating for Congress to put an immediate end to irrational fuel speculation when it reconvened in September.

On September 18, the House passed H.R.6604, the Commodities Markets Accountability and Transparency Act of 2008, by a vote of 283–133. The Act will introduce transparency and accountability into the energy commodities markets where "paper speculators" and hedge fund managers, with no relation to the oil industry or consumers, have unfairly influenced the price of oil and wreaked havoc on the airline industry.

As *Air Line Pilot* went to press, H.R.6604 was traveling through the channels of government. To be enacted into law this year, the Senate must pass the bill and send it to the president before Congress adjourns.

ALPA's elected pilot leaders championed this issue by participating in press conferences, lobbying members of Congress, and encouraging ALPA members to get involved.

At the end of the day, no matter the issue or its timeliness, individual pilots are the ones who determine the success of ALPA's flight plan. The union, after all, is only as strong as its member support. All the strategic planning is for naught without ALPA member involvement. And with member support, the Association can achieve any goal it sets out to reach.

From the evidence available, it is apparent that despite rough economic air, ALPA has made measurable progress since the BOD last convened some 2 years ago. 🌐

Idea to Policy

Virtually every ALPA initiative starts with an idea. A member at some level of the organization recognizes a need or develops a solution to a problem, and the Association and profession ultimately benefit. But how does a member's idea work its way through the organization to become ALPA policy? What is the vetting process and who is involved?

The framework for ALPA's governance is defined by its Constitution and By-Laws, which provides structure and flexibility in the decision-making process. A pilot suggestion can travel through the policy pipeline in various directions, depending upon the proposal's origin, its nature, and the meeting schedule of the Association's governing bodies. Let's walk through one possible scenario, remembering that there is no single path to implementing ALPA policy.

A first officer of a member airline has an idea that could generate extra cash for ALPA. He shares this suggestion with his status representative, who applauds the proposal and brings it before the first officer's local executive council (LEC) at its next meeting. The local council thinks it's a great idea and drafts a resolution presenting the idea to the master executive council (MEC) to build support and consensus for the proposal. (The MEC speaks for the member's entire pilot group and represents one of the most important representational structures within the Association.)

Following discussion at the next meeting, the members of the MEC decide they also like the first officer's idea and they move to endorse it. Since the idea requires a change to the Constitution and By-Laws, it will require action by ALPA's Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors is made up of all the representatives from all ALPA local councils, and it meets every 2 years. An MEC has the authority to place items on the agenda for a meeting of the Board of Directors, so the MEC forwards its resolution to the Association's vice-president-administration/secretary to include in the Board of Directors agenda.

To ensure efficient and thorough consideration of agenda items to be presented to the Board of Directors, ALPA's Executive Board reviews and makes recommendations on each item on the BOD's advance agenda. The Executive Board is made up of

recommended the proposal, as is, to the full Board of Directors for approval. In this hypothetical case, the committee opts for the latter, and the resolution is put before the entire Board of Directors for a final vote. And during a plenary session, the BOD unanimously supports it. As a result, ALPA policy is amended and the idea has become reality.

Again, ALPA policy can be implemented through a variety of channels. According to Article VII, Section 4A (2) of the Association's Constitution and By-Laws, "(BOD meeting) agenda items may be submitted by a local council, a master executive council, the Execu-

ALPA's structure is pilot driven, giving everyone an opportunity to participate in the Association's decision-making and direction. The organization is configured so that, from new hire to Association president, every ALPA voice counts.



ALPA's MEC chairmen. In our example, the Executive Board recommends that a resolution implementing the first officer's idea be adopted by the Board of Directors.

At the Board of Directors meeting, the agenda item will be assigned to one of eight subcommittees for review. The committee delegates debate the pros and cons of the proposal and decide whether to recommend that the Board of Directors takes no action, whether to recommend that a modified version of the proposal be adopted, or whether to

recommend that the Board of Directors take action. However, these submissions must meet certain conditions. A careful review of ALPA's Constitution and By-Laws will explain any additional requirements.

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AN ACME AIRLINES F/O HAS A SUGGESTION AND PRESENTS IT TO HIS LOCAL COUNCIL REP.



I HAVE A GREAT IDEA!

THE LOCAL COUNCIL TURNS THE F/O'S IDEA INTO A RESOLUTION.



ALL IN FAVOR, SAY "AYE."

THE MEC CONSIDERS THE LOCAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION AND VOTES TO PRESENT THE IDEA TO THE ALPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.



ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE WE VOTE?

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD-ALL OF ALPA'S MEC CHAIRMEN-REVIEWS AND MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EACH ITEM ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADVANCE AGENDA.



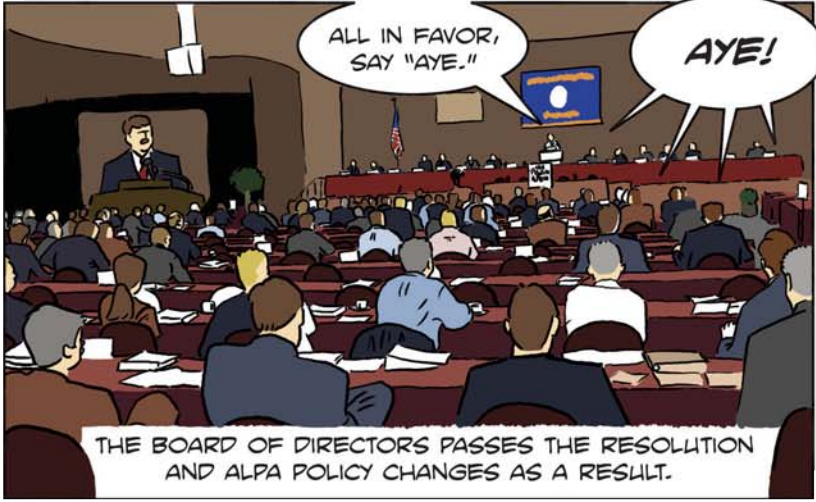
ALL THOSE IN FAVOR OF ITEM SIX, SAY "AYE."



DURING ALPA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, A DELEGATE COMMITTEE REVIEWS THE RESOLUTION & MAKES A RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

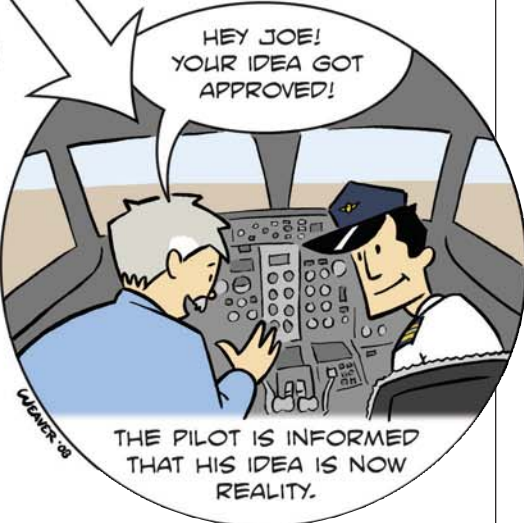
ALL IN FAVOR, SAY "AYE."

AYE!



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PASSES THE RESOLUTION AND ALPA POLICY CHANGES AS A RESULT.

HEY JOE! YOUR IDEA GOT APPROVED!



THE PILOT IS INFORMED THAT HIS IDEA IS NOW REALITY.

CHRISTOPHER WEAVER