



GETTING IT IN WRITING - IS THAT REALLY THE ANSWER?

You may hear comments such as, "I love my job and the pay and benefits, but I just want to get it in writing in a contract."

If you think about it, relying on fixed contracts to determine how all aspects of your employment relationship are handled has not been to the best advantage of flight attendants at most other major carriers.

On the contrary. In many cases, a contract-based relationship resulted in significant disadvantages for other airline flight attendants.

Consider this:

- Union-negotiated compensation may be inflexible for the length of a contract (often four years or more; in the case of flight attendants at United, 10 years) instead of being reviewed annually.
- Inflexible contract provisions don't allow the company the option to evaluate the best ways to respond to unanticipated or unique workplace needs. (For example, the industry crisis resulting from the Sept. 11 attacks resulted in layoffs at most carriers with flight attendant union representation.)
- Rigid work rules offer little or no flexibility -- period.
- Contrary to union claims, a contract provides no guarantees. Employees at carriers like Eastern, Braniff, PanAm and, more recently, TWA, who had some of the strongest contracts in the industry, learned that all contracts are subject to change, depending in large part on the financial condition of the employer. Those employees whose contracts guaranteed them a package of high pay, benefits and job security ultimately had little or nothing to show for it.
- Because Delta has the flexibility to respond to changing conditions, the company can take the risk of providing pay and benefit packages that equal or exceed those provided by our competitors. Our flexibility allows us to address changing market conditions in a manner that protects the long-term interests of Delta, its people and its customers. As long as Delta remains financially strong, it will be in Delta's best interests to provide competitive pay and benefit packages that attract and retain the highest caliber employees. If Delta can't remain competitive and loses its financial strength, the strongest contract in the world will be of little use if there aren't the resources to cover top-of-the-line pay and benefits.
- Successful organizations become successful and stay that way because they rely on mutual trust and respect to make the organization better, not because of contracts. If we haven't succeeded in creating an environment of mutual trust and respect, we all need to work harder to achieve this. If "getting it in writing" was really the answer, people at all of those now-defunct carriers would be better off today than Delta people are.

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