

Podcast Transcription

Fly By Night Episode 13: Captain Nick Bolander LEC 7 Secretary Treasurer, Block 8 Representative

Captain Chris Lee My guest today is Captain Nick Bolander. He is a MEC representative and he represents Block 8. Nick thanks for coming.

Captain Nick Bolander Thanks for having me Chris.

Captain Chris Lee Talk a little bit about your background before FedEx and what you've been doing at FedEx.

Captain Nick Bolander Prior to FedEx I spent five years at a regional carrier, GoJet Airlines, two and half years as a first officer and then the last two and a half as a Captain. And then I was hired at FedEx about two and a half years ago. The first seat that I was in was in the right seat of the 767 and some 757 flying back before the bid pack was split. And then most recently here I've just upgraded to a Captain on the 757.

Captain Chris Lee What can you tell me about your previous union experience?

Captain Nick Bolander Prior to FedEx I was at GoJet Airlines and I did a couple of union positions. The first one was on the scheduling committee and the bigger items that we dealt with there were 117 implementation as well as pairing generation and construction, trying to make sure that we could produce the most efficient pairings for our pilots. After that, I was elected as the Chief Steward and I did that position for my last two years there while we were in Section 6 negotiations until we were able to get a ratified contract in 2016.

Captain Chris Lee Now people may not be familiar with Chief Steward what does that mean?

Captain Nick Bolander Chief Steward would be similar to our MEC Chairman position here. We were a unionized property there but it was structured a little differently.

Captain Chris Lee So what about your union experience here at FedEx?

Captain Nick Bolander The first place I got involved with was the membership committee. I helped the initial group that put together the mentorship program. That's basically the program that we use to get our new hires engaged with ALPA right away. There was a need for candidates to run for the Block 8 position and so I decided to put my name on the ballot and run for the position. I felt like there was more that I could do for the pilot group and I was fortunate enough to get elected. And that leads us to where we are today.

Captain Chris Lee You mentioned helping with the mentorship program. What value does that program provide for our new hires?

Captain Nick Bolander One of the biggest things I see is it allows a spot for that pilot to go to ask any of his questions that he or she may have. For example, I remember when I was hired here, how do I deviate? Well that question usually got answered by calling a buddy of mine. How do I expense report things? They're very complex issues that unless you have somebody to go to to walk you step by step through them they can be things that

become overwhelming when you're already trying to learn FedEx as a whole and how we operate. And so, I see the program as being one that can be once again kind of a one stop shop, one person to talk to, a person you feel comfortable with to answer any of those type of questions.

Captain Chris Lee And that mentor has been trained by the union.

Captain Nick Bolander Yes most definitely. They've been trained through a one-day training process usually and most of our domestic guys come in here to the office and they get to meet with all the subject matter experts (SME's) and then our international guys were doing that through a podcast or a webinar-based training.

Captain Chris Lee So you're the Block 8 Rep, that's the most junior pilots and you deal with all the new hires.

Captain Nick Bolander Yes correct Chris. So, one of the things I try to do to stay engaged with all the new hires is we do a new hire brief at the Crescent Club and so I try to attend many of those. I'm sure that most of the new hires have probably seen me up there and that's probably the first interaction I've had with them.

Captain Chris Lee That new hire a presentation, that's a good opportunity for the new hires to meet various members of committees and leadership from the union.

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah it is. And you know it really allows them to basically get more information inside of what we do as a block rep as well as what all the committee members do and what services we can offer them to help make their first year, two years, three years on property much easier.

Captain Chris Lee Well how do you see your role as a block rep?

Captain Nick Bolander You know my role I think is kind of multifaceted. I really think of myself as a one stop contact for any of the Block 8 pilots. So, no matter what your question may be if you don't know who to call, I would really like you to reach out to me and even though I might not be the expert on that subject I could at least lead you to the right person that would be able to give you the correct answer.

Captain Chris Lee And the way our block system works, Block 8 is in Council 7 so you have also Block 1 and Block 4 in your council. So, you deal with all those pilots.

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah, and that's one of the great things I think about LEC 7 is that within LEC 7 we've got a representative that represents the most senior group of pilots here at FedEx. We've got a representative that represents the middle of the pack seniority. And then you've got me who represents the most junior pilots within our pilot group. I think what that really does is we collaborate together very well to try to come up with ideas that are beneficial to the entire seniority list.

Captain Chris Lee Well you mentioned you just became a Block Rep. How long does that term last?

Captain Nick Bolander That term lasts three years. And I started at the beginning of March and so I will be the Block 8 Rep taking us into contract negotiations in 2021.

Captain Chris Lee What can pilots do to stay up to date on what ALPA and their association is doing for them?

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah that's a great question. It's a question I get quite a bit when people e-mail me or call me. You can go to fdx.alpa.org and under the administrative section at the bottom of the page click on the email and contact update icon. Once you click on that you're going to notice there's a member info icon. If you click on it it is going to give you all the information that you need starting with your council and then if you scroll down a little bit further you're going to notice mail and email preference. If you click on that that allows you to select what information you get via email. And as we all know the easiest way to communicate with our pilot group is via email. So, it's very important to keep that stuff up to date.

Captain Chris Lee What do you see as the most important thing pilots can do as we approach negotiations?

Captain Nick Bolander You know I think the biggest thing is engagement. Anytime a big group has a goal that they're trying to achieve the goal is never achievable unless the group as a whole is engaged in what the goal is. Going back to what we said before, the easiest way to be engaged is having your contact information updated, being able to receive the emails which will give you things such as our podcast and our mailers both from the local level as well as the national level.

Captain Chris Lee And the engagement leads to more unity.

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah exactly and unity is definitely one of the underlying things that you have to have going into the negotiations. Your Reps such as myself have to feel like the group is behind us and that we have their support. And so, any concerns you would have I'd love to hear those but we also, the reps like to hear that hey we think you're doing a good job. That also helps us know that we're doing the right thing for our pilot group.

Captain Chris Lee How would you like for the pilots to reach out and contact you?

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah there's a couple different ways. You can email me or call me. Both of those contacts can be found on fdx.alpa.org. Another big thing I'd like to bring up Chris is the [PDR](#). I think this has probably honestly been one of the best things the union has done in the last year that I've been involved with union work. And the reason is it's a one stop shop to go to get all your issues heard by the proper people. So, for example, I show up to the airplane and the catering is spoiled. I do a PDR that's going to go to the proper person, the proper channel to go back to the company to get that issue resolved.

Captain Chris Lee Having that data that you get from the PDR that's got to be helpful for you guys moving into negotiations.

Captain Nick Bolander Oh without a doubt immensely. So, you know the process is anytime we come to the company with an issue their first response is show us the problem. And without any data it's hard for us to justify where the problems are. To have that data when we go into a meeting with the company allows us to solidify our position that there's a real problem out there because we have 25, 35 or 40 of these reports in the system saying the same thing. They can't turn to us and say there is no problem then.

Captain Chris Lee The past couple of MEC meetings the representatives have been spending time in preparation for contract negotiations. How's that going?

Captain Nick Bolander It's going really well. In fact, in September we've got a meeting in Washington DC to meet with ALPA National consultants and so we're starting the framework of putting together what our pillar items will be and making sure that we have an understanding as a group of what the pilot group wants as their pillar items. And that's what we're here to do. We're here to represent the pilot group and so we want to make sure that we have our agenda down to do just that.

Captain Chris Lee So how do you receive pilot input for negotiations?

Captain Nick Bolander You know we get them through a few different places. First one being surveys. In September here you'll notice that there's going to be a survey coming out. Another big one is what we just talked about earlier is the [PDR](#) system that is a data collection database. It's going to be huge moving into the next round of negotiations. Contract enforcement is another one. They're the people on the frontlines that are hearing what the issues are of the pilot group as they call in with issues with the contract. Another one is block reps like myself. I get e-mails phone calls, I keep all that. And then the last one that I can think of off the top my head is the committees or the SME's on each different area. For example, Scheduling or the R&I committee, we've got to listen to those people. They know where the issues are with that certain section of the contract. And we take all those inputs from all those different sources and that's how we decide how to move forward.

Captain Chris Lee Well Nick thanks so much for being here today. Any final thoughts?

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah Chris thanks again for having me. I've got a couple parting words I'd like to leave with the pilot group and a couple of those are unity and engagement. As a guy that's been involved in Section 6 negotiations before and a leader through that process I can tell you that we are stronger together than we are individually. We've got to become unified and speak with one voice and how we become unified is key. The unity comes from engagement. There're numerous different ways to become engaged. Like we talked about earlier, through e-mail or through calling your block rep, the [PDR](#) system, calling the SME's on the committees and through volunteering. Those are just a few ways to become engaged. Without engagement our group will never accomplish their goal. I think every pilot on property as I talk to him and get feedback from them tells me one thing, they want to get this next contract right. And the only way to get that right is through a unified voice and through a unified pilot group. And I'm here is one of the block reps to make sure that we get that done correctly.

Captain Chris Lee Thanks again Nick for being here and thank you for listening. If you have any topic ideas or questions please send us an email at fdxpodcast@alpa.org and as always be safe out there and we'll see you next time.