

Podcast Transcription

Fly by Night: Captain Walt Owen - Training Committee Chairman

Captain Chris Lee My guest today is Captain Walt Owen. He is the Training Committee Chairman. Hey, Walt, thanks for coming.

Captain Walt Owen I appreciate it. Glad to be here.

Captain Chris Lee Talk a little bit about your background before FedEx.

Captain Walt Owen I was a military brat and then spent 20 years in the military. I retired out of that from flying the fighters there then came to FedEx straight out of that.

Captain Chris Lee What have you been doing at FedEx?

Captain Walt Owen At FedEx, I started out on the 727 like everybody else. I've been in all three of those seats before that airplane left. I've also been on the MD11 and now I'm on the 777 since '09.

Captain Chris Lee What can you tell the pilots about your union experience?

Captain Walt Owen Mostly I worked as an SME, usually for the training committee or in reference to training.

Captain Chris Lee You took over as the training committee chairman from Ty Sanders. How's it going?

Captain Walt Owen It's been very interesting and actually a lot of fun taking over. Tyler was really great handing stuff off...a lot of info that I've had to pedal fast to pick up on, but it seems to be progressing pretty well.

Captain Chris Lee Who do you have on your committee?

Captain Walt Owen Chris Fitz is my Vice-Chair. He's pretty dynamic. He's got a lot of information. He does great work. And John Reesman is the TRB coordinator for us, the Training Review Board coordinator. And we have several SMEs in each one of the tracks.

Captain Chris Lee How do you see your role as the Training Committee Chairman?

Captain Walt Owen One thing I'd like to think about is really helping guys like John with the TRB and Chris get things done that they need to do. I'm also, as the training committee chair, I'm the ALPA rep to the Training Review Board and the enhanced oversight group that manages the Enhanced Oversight Program here at FedEx.

Captain Chris Lee Well, since you brought up the TRB, what can you tell pilots about that process? How does that work?

Captain Walt Owen The TRB process, the Training Review Board is really one of the bright spots in the relationship between the company and the union. I'm really enthusiastic about the way it works. The group as a whole is there to help the student that's coming before us, help him achieve better results and it's universal across all the members. We're

there for that person to help them progress and help them get back to the line and do what they really want to do, which is fly airplanes.

Captain Chris Lee I'm sure it's a pretty stressful event for a pilot to go to the TRB.

Captain Walt Owen There's no doubt. Nobody wants to be there. Nobody that gets in that situation shows up going, hey, I'd like to be at the TRB. And that's one of the things that's both on the Company side and the ALPA side that we try to do is put him at ease. And I really have to applaud the Company in this regard. They really are working hard to make this a really successful event for whoever comes in.

Captain Chris Lee You also mentioned the EOP process. What can you tell pilots about that?

Captain Walt Owen So the enhanced oversight program is evolving. Once again, it's another one of those things that probably nobody wants to do, but it is fundamentally, once again, another one of those programs that's there for the pilot to help them be the best that they can be. That group also goes at that with the same mindset. So, it's to get the additional training to help that person make sure that fundamentally they're doing the very best job they can. And it's no longer somebody looking over your shoulder. It's not that. It is there for you to help you get better. And you can participate when you come before it. If you get put into the Enhanced Oversight Program, one of the things you're going to get asked is what do you think you need help with? How can we help you? That group and the whole program is one of those things that I think is a win for the union and for the Company.

Captain Chris Lee So there is an interactive element to it.

Captain Walt Owen Yes, there is.

Captain Chris Lee Now that we're in a 9 and 18-month training cycle, how can pilots better prepare for training?

Captain Walt Owen Obviously, you can go on the website and go to whatever particular aircraft you're on and you have access to all of the training materials that you're going to be seeing when you walk in. You even get to see the briefings before you're given the briefings. You'll see any of that paperwork that's going to go along with them. You'll see a lot of the docs that you would use even on the CLOE. So, there's a lot of opportunities there to get yourself prepared in advance. And if all else fails, if you have questions, you can get in touch with the training manager. Call that phone number and ask him, how can I do this or talk to the leads for each one of the tracks. And then certainly anybody that has any questions can feel free to call me or text me or email me and ask me and I will get back to him and try to resolve any questions they have coming into training.

Captain Chris Lee One of the opportunities pilots have is the proficiency rides. Are people taking advantage of that?

Captain Walt Owen They have to some degree, maybe not as much, and maybe because they don't really understand what the Proficiency Enhancement Partnership Program (PEPP) program does for them. It is another one of those things that in the contract allows somebody to come in and get proficiency training. Think about it. The Company is giving you an instructor and giving you a simulator to do two hours of whatever it is you want to

do. I've personally given PEPP events and the way I started out if they don't call me, I'll call the student and say, what do you want? What do you want for this two hours and we'll show up prior and talk about things if you need to in the briefing and then go into the sim and do whatever it is you feel like you need to do to make yourself a more capable pilot on the line.

Captain Chris Lee It seems like a great benefit to the pilots to be able to take advantage of that.

Captain Walt Owen It really is.

Captain Chris Lee Any final thoughts?

Captain Walt Owen Yeah, I'd like to bring up just a few things. The first is when you come to training, whether it's ITU or CQ, it's pretty easy at the end when you finish your ITU and you go, done, off to the new airplane or CQ, done with this cycle and you walk away. It's pretty easy to forget that you have an opportunity to give feedback. I can't emphasize how important this can be to not just you, but to other people that are coming along behind you. They're going to participate in similar training. You've got an opportunity here to say some things about the content and instructors or the instruction you were given. And you can also say something about frequency. If you feel like it was great training, but I would really like to see it more often. Nobody likes to come to the schoolhouse. We get that. But if you feel like professionally you need to come more often, let them know. If you feel like something in the content is like, hey, that's a little fundamental. I need a little bit more advanced stuff. Say something, or if you feel like an instructor did something great, let us know. If you feel like an instructor could have done something better, let us know. I'm here to tell you that that feedback from you gets paid attention to. People read that. You hit the feedback button and that email goes to a cornucopia, a plethora of folks that read it. So, you have an impact. I can't overemphasize how much I really think that would be a value not just to you, but to the people that come after you. The second thing is you're going to periodically see and there's some being run in the Positive Rate now, request for support to do things like review LMS or review the tri-annual training that we're getting and you get to do it for credit. So, you checkmark, you got it done. But it also sets the timing, everything for other people to do it. So helping out with that as a line guy, that's a way you can help improve what's happening for pilots. And then finally, there's a lot of things going on in the training department. They're doing a lot of improving on equipment. Some exciting things are coming. But at the same time, make known, what you want. In that feedback, I told you previously, if you felt like, hey, man, it would have been great to have some sort of an iPad FMS trainer, something we've been beating the band about. We all know we would love to have it. Where is it? If you keep saying it eventually the squeaky wheel will get greased. So let people know about things you want. You fundamentally can make a huge difference by making those kinds of inputs.

Captain Chris Lee What's the best way if a pilot has a training committee issue to reach out to you?

Captain Walt Owen Probably the very best way is by PDR. So if you could just go on the website fdx.alpa.org and select [PDR](#) and Training Committee and fill in the blanks and send it off it will get all the attention it needs and that'll really energize across the board.

Captain Chris Lee Well, great Walt, thanks for coming and thanks for listening. If you have any questions or topic ideas, please send me an email to fdxpodcast@alpa.org. And as always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.