

Podcast Transcription

Fly by Night: Captain Dave Chase, MEC Chairman (September 2020)

Captain Chris Lee My guest today is Captain Dave Chase, MEC Chairman. You recently put out a communication where you wrote about moving the deadline of the survey. The new deadline is now Friday, October 2nd, at 2359 Central Daylight Time.

Captain Dave Chase 100% participation is important to me because I represent all the pilots. I know some people say that's pie in the sky. You'll never get every last person to participate. I understand that. But as the MEC sits around the table and decides the trajectory of our goals and proposals in bargaining, understand this survey will not have them sit down and do any type of specific language. But, it shows them what they need to point at in terms of the pilots' goals. And as we decide how much are we going to change, it should be obvious that a high participation rate shows the MEC that there's true energy behind what we may ask for. Whereas a very low participation rate would say there's not much energy and maybe some people want to change things, but maybe not as much as could be. So, I would encourage everybody not voting, it's not the same as not voting in an election. Not voting in an election means, hey, whatever anybody else wants I want. Not participating in a survey means there's not much energy out here to do things. So that's why 100% is important for me. I want this organization to be 100% behind what we do. That doesn't mean everybody gets exactly what they want, but it does mean that, hey, I am behind this group and where we're going is important to me and I want to be part of the success of the group.

Captain Chris Lee Well, we've talked about this before, but we typically use two different types of surveys, a phone survey where pilots are randomly selected to participate, and online Web-based surveys where all pilots are able to participate. Why would we choose one over the other?

Captain Dave Chase The phone survey, we can use less pilots. We can get the answers we need and have statistical validity with a smaller group. Typically, we can do that in a shorter timeframe with less communication necessary. And it provides statistically valid quick feedback to the group that we're serving for. An online survey is different. We give every pilot an opportunity to participate. The current survey has free-text responses and all of those will be read and collated as well. So that provides everybody an opportunity to participate and provide input. But self-selection bias can creep in where motivated people can show up and answer questions. So, we need a far greater participation. They take longer, but they allow us to see how much energy is behind the proposals. I talked about that in my comm. We can see how many people answer. So it's not just what do the pilots want, but it's how many pilots said they want it. How many people took the time to say, I'm motivated, I'm ready, I have energy and I want to be part of this and I want to make a difference.

Captain Chris Lee Well, in your first communication as MEC Chairman you wrote, you will work to ensure that pilots have opportunities to be heard and to provide input. The survey is one of those ways.

Captain Dave Chase Absolutely, it's not just the survey, though. When I wrote my first column as Chairman, I wanted the pilots to understand, I live in Anchorage, but I've commuted to Memphis. I've heard people over the years talk about how hard it is to get to Memphis for meetings or to hear what's going on. And I've definitely shared some of that

experience myself. I understand that mindset. But we have other ways we can get you involved through the unity building events where we set up GoToMeeting and you can come online and talk with the officers or the committee chairs directly related to what they're doing. We've worked hard to do that. And we're gonna have an online joint council meeting in the October meeting. And then the local councils will have briefings set up separately where you can talk to your block reps. We clearly are doing these surveys and the PDR has been overwhelmingly successful as a way for pilots to communicate.

Captain Chris Lee Many of those online meetings came about because of COVID. Do you see those continuing?

Captain Dave Chase Definitely. The way the technologies come together across the world here, you see more companies and organizations using these events. And I don't see a world where we go back to only in-person events. I think it's excellent. We've had people from Cologne or Asia tuning in to hear our different events. The officers and the committee chairs, we love to get the direct feedback at these meetings. It's been a lot of fun for us. We'd like to get even more people to participate. And I look forward to doing a lot of those in the future long after COVID.

Captain Chris Lee We also hear on the line or through social media that the union doesn't want the pilots' input or that they're writing survey questions to get the results that they're looking for.

Captain Dave Chase I've heard those rumors that we don't want to hear pilot input. I've heard people say some of those types of things to me. Nothing could be further from the truth. We're a large group. These questions are written by a separate group than the MEC that approves them. They're our best effort into finding out what the pilots want as a group. And it provides us an opportunity to say, okay, this categorizes the type of things that are important to the pilots. And then we're going to go back and in the areas where we may need to see more specifics it gives us an opportunity to do those follow on surveys. We've said it many times. I'll say it again right here. I'm committed to data from what the pilots want to achieve, and I'm committed to doing it on a regular basis. We've asked our pollster, I think we've put this out before, Chris, he's been very clear with us that survey data should be about six or eight months old, depending on outside influence. There could be a massive shock, like a COVID or something that could change things for certain. But if we stick in that range, we have data that we can work with. And that's why we mix in the types of surveys and the time frames and the questions. And they're set up around us getting valid data that people can make decisions on versus rumors or the latest post on some social media or something. So there's a lot of input that goes into it from the Reps. They take email, they listen to the committee chairs and they listen to the staff that works on some of the problems in the everyday world. But then this survey definitely provides us directional input as well. It puts a real data test to what we're talking about.

Captain Chris Lee So what did you mean in your last comm when you wrote, Lofty expectations are inconsistent with low participation?

Captain Dave Chase Well, we're talking about the survey in particular, and if the pilots are going to have goals in their mind for what's going to make a ratifiable agreement, then we need to see that there's energy and a willingness to fight for those goals. If we have low participation in things like survey and online events and meetings, then that just shows that possibly we're aiming for goals that the pilots aren't willing to fight for. So I encourage everybody, if you have high expectations or expectations for changes, you need to get out,

participate and make sure there's enough energy behind those proposals that we can achieve them.

Captain Chris Lee Well, we have a CBA and we are a collective. And that word means something.

Captain Dave Chase Yeah. I mean, these are group decisions. It's not a what do I want club. It's a what do we want. What can we achieve together. That requires group effort. Every day we're over here fighting to maintain the collective bargaining agreement. It's not fair to the negotiating committee or anybody else, any of the other pilots that we're asking to do a bunch of work, if the pilots are going to demand certain things and not come out and participate and stand up and fight for them along with them. We've heard volunteers in the past use expressions like the Company looks right over our shoulders and looks to see how many people are standing behind us. And I can tell you, when you get into the office in here, that makes a lot of sense and you really understand just how true that is.

Captain Chris Lee Especially during bargaining, when we do these events participation matters.

Captain Dave Chase Participation is everything. We need to see those people standing behind us to know that what we're asking the Company is supported by the pilots. The Company needs to see that. I love the fact that the pilots get to see the individuals doing the work. The feedback is essential to make sure we're going in the right direction for the pilots. It breeds that other sense of confidence. It takes away some of that discussion of, well, ALPA does things but I would do something different. And I think it gives everybody an opportunity to see that ALPA is line pilots organizing together, coming up with the ideas and getting the feedback from the pilots to get work done.

Captain Chris Lee Any final thoughts?

Captain Dave Chase Yeah, we have a big year ahead of us. November 2021's our amendable date. In between now and then, the MEC has set a pretty aggressive schedule. The openers will be created in that time, largely based on this survey and what this survey shows us we need to drill down and find out more about for some specifics. After the first of the year, you'll start to see more pilot education come out. We have a lot of new pilots. They go all the way up into Block 6 now of pilots that weren't even here on the last bargaining agreement. So there's going to be education for some of those pilots who aren't familiar with the Railway Labor Act or how to bargain in Section 6. I'd encourage everybody to be mindful that flight management is able to monitor online forums for either your goals or your dialog. I'd encourage the best way to share some of that is with your block rep or through a PDR or on these online surveys in the free text. I think that's a much safer way to input what you care about and what's important to you. And then we're going to have some events and we're trying to figure that out internally right now around COVID. I mean, that takes some prediction that we're not experts on. So we discussed some of the online events. We've discussed what can we do in person and how. How can we do that safely and consistently with some of our asks. And so we're going to be communicating regularly with the pilots, seeking input, finding ways for them to get involved with us and show that they have the energy to go out and participate. We have a history. We're gonna show the pilots, some of the other pilots in the past that have shown up, attended events, big rallies, put a lot of energy behind things that we've been successful on in the past. We're going to ask the pilots to get behind us 100%. We'll have events that include opportunities for pilots to participate along with even their families so when you go home

from work, your spouse and your children understand what it is that you're committing some of your extra time to. This is not an us and them game, the us versus them here is ALPA and the corporation. It's not pilot on pilot. We're going to come up with not what necessarily I want or you want, Chris, but what we want as a group. Then we're going to have to get committed behind what we want to do and go out and achieve that. If the pilots don't participate, we can't succeed. If the pilots participate and everyone shows up, we win. Right?

Captain Chris Lee Thanks, Dave, and thanks for listening. If you have any questions, go to fdx.alpa.org and utilize the PDR link and as always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.