

Podcast Transcription

Fly by Night: Captain Nick Bolander Council 26 Vice Chair, Block 11 Representative (Sept 2021)

Captain Chris Lee My guest today is Captain Nick Bolander. Nick is the Council 26 Vice Chair and the Block 11 Representative. Thanks for coming, Nick.

Captain Nick Bolander Thanks for having me back Chris. First of all, I'd like to take the time to thank all the pilots that have recently come out to the family awareness events. We had one in Indy, Anchorage, and Memphis at the Redbirds game. Also, there have been numerous pilots that have been engaged on the pub calls over the last few months. And so, once again, to all those pilots out there that are getting engaged, that are staying informed, and taking the time to come talk to us through the numerous different types of communication that we put out to you we do appreciate it. Thank you.

Captain Chris Lee The last time you did a podcast with me, you were the Block 8 Rep. Can you talk about your position now as the Block 11 Rep?

Captain Nick Bolander So as the Block 8 Rep, I represented the most junior pilots in the Memphis domicile. While doing that position, I was hired as an instructor pilot and so therefore I was going to be transferring to Block 11. There was a vacancy in that position. I was encouraged by another couple of members to run for that position. I ran for it and was elected. And so now I represent all of our Memphis domiciled LCAs, SCAs, and instructor pilots. When I was the Block 8 Rep, we were in the process of putting the path to negotiations together, which meant we had to come up with a plan and then build that plan. And now that I'm in the Block 11 position, we're at the execution phase and the execution phase is getting the Opener's on the table, which we did a few months back, and now actually in the back and forth bargaining.

Captain Chris Lee Since you're still a MEC Rep even though you're representing a different block now, talk some about how you see the MECs role.

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah. So the MEC is made up of numerous representatives, either via a seniority breakdown in the Memphis domicile or the outer domiciles. And so we have those representatives at the table to represent the entire pilot group. As you have issues that are brought forth in front of the MEC, you're representing your constituents, not just the FedEx pilot group as a whole, but on some of the issues more specifically to the pilots that you represent in your block system. So, for example, in my case, the standards check airmen, line check airmen and instructor pilots.

Captain Chris Lee Our big hot topic now is negotiations. We are in negotiations with the company on Contract 2021. Talk some about that.

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah, I'll start off with, kind of to throw a plug out, a lot of the information in regards to negotiations can be found at fdxcontract2021.com. All of the documents put out by the Negotiating Committee are on that website, as well as a timetable or a tracking device that shows you where we are on each section. So, for example, if ALPA passes Section 26, that'll be updated there. If the Company passes a proposal, it'll show the date and what section has been passed. So it's a great place to go to track those items. The other thing that's on there that I think is of great value is the ability to compare our contract in different areas to all the other airlines, more specifically

the other major airlines. That's broken down into different big sections in the contracts, such as scheduling, pay rates, retirement, vacation. It's a great place to go.

Captain Chris Lee Talk about the importance of our pilots being engaged and informed.

Captain Nick Bolander The biggest thing I see is the unity that is required to achieve the goal at the end of the contract, and unity isn't something that you just say or happens overnight. It's usually a set of circumstances that happen that get a group of people rallied around a bigger cause. So a lot of times the questions I hear are, hey, why do we wear a lanyard? A lanyard is not going to do anything to get anything achieved. And I couldn't disagree more with that statement. It's not about the lanyard. It's about the group showing each other that they're in the bigger group to get the goal at the end of the day done. It's no different than the pilot that says, hey, if we're asked to hold a picket sign on Democrat, why would we ever do that? That's not going to get anything done. Well, once again, I holistically disagree with that. If you're out there in a big group of people trying to get something accomplished, you're not only stating that to the world, either whether that's through the media coming in and covering it, but you're standing there next to your fellow pilots and, you know, your fellow pilot has your back to get that goal achieved. So it must become all of our responsibility. I've heard a lot of times, what is ALPA going to do or what is this person going to do to get unity? Well, unity isn't one person. As I just stated with some of the examples before, we all have to take the responsibility for unity. So when we have the opportunity to talk to our fellow pilots, we need to start talking about, hey, where are we at in negotiations? What's the Company's position? One thing you'll notice is the Company hasn't published their positions to you guys, although ALPA has. So you have to ask the question, why is that, right. Why don't they tell you where their positions are on certain things? I think that should be very telling to the pilot group on what they truly want. So those types of conversations all come out of being engaged, talking to your fellow pilots about it, which then builds the unity holistically.

Captain Chris Lee As a member of the MEC, are you getting a feel for the Company's proposals?

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah, definitely. Pat May his group, Rich Brown, Mike Weskalnies all keep us very up to date on what's going on. We try not to talk specific details about positions at the table, but we are very aware of what's going on. And what I can say is this, is that I get the question also a lot hey Nick we've worked really, really hard over the last two years to make the Company very, very financially viable. They have been one of the big winners of businesses and the pandemic. A lot of that was due to all the employee groups at FedEx, but more specifically to the pilots. The pilots have gone above and beyond time after time after time in circumstances that we couldn't have even fathomed two to two and a half years ago. And so the question becomes is, does the Company come to the table with positions on items that would want to reward the pilots for that? And the answer is no. Up to this point, the Company has actually tried to put positions on the table that would go the opposite way when looking at things like quality of life in your schedule. They're putting things out there that are asking you to do more for less. We know that we have record amounts of AVA and draft and extra flying out there right now. They want you to do more of that at straight pay, even though they're asking you to go above and beyond your normal schedule. So what I have realized is that although we might be getting "good job" FCIFs or emails from the Company is that's all great but the product at the bargaining table has not met those communications that we've received yet.

Captain Chris Lee You mentioned at this stage, we don't give out detailed proposal information. Can you talk some about negotiating in public and how that's not in our pilots' best interest?

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah, that's a great question, and it's one that I actually get from constituents, and the easiest way to say that is that we don't bargain in public because, number one, we don't want to put our position out before we actually get it at the bargaining table. Keep in mind that when you open bargaining, you're not giving your actual position on all the items to the Company on day one. So sometimes there's some tact in getting that stuff out and why we would pass it at certain times. And it would be a disadvantage to the pilot group to have that out there in the public scene well before we even give it to the Company. Another good example is that there are a lot of times when you're talking to people or things that are posted on social media sites where pilots are actually asking for less or advocating a position for less on a certain item than where we are at the bargaining table with the Company. So what ends up happening is you hear the term, we end up negotiating with ourselves in public, and that's not the job of the pilot group holistically. We've got to trust the negotiating committee. We've got to give them clear and concise goals and let them achieve that and not bargain with ourselves in public.

Captain Chris Lee We also know that we have pilots in management who have access to that same information.

Captain Nick Bolander Undoubtedly, you know, yesterday I had the opportunity to do two pub calls. One of the things I found interesting is very shortly after that call, one of our officers received a text from a member in management basically answering a question that was asked in that pub call. So we say it time and time and time again that anything that we put out to the pilot group in written form or in video form or these podcasts most definitely will make it to the management group.

Captain Chris Lee We send out a lot of communications to our pilots, talk about the importance during negotiations of having accurate and updated contact information with ALPA.

Captain Nick Bolander It's very imperative. That's our main way that we communicate with our pilots. For example, the other day we had a pub call. All the information in regards to the dates for that type of stuff is on there. Our LEC meetings when we have those, all the email updates that come from the Chairman, your Block Reps, and the Negotiating Committee all funnel through your email as well as things like these podcasts. So if a pilot goes to fdx.alpa.org, there is an icon on the home page and it says email and contact update. If you click on that, it will ask you to log in and you can update your email preferences there. And the key is, is that you obviously are getting your local comms, your MEC comms and there's a big list in there of items that you can kind of choose from. But for sure, you want to be getting all of this stuff from FedEx ALPA.

Captain Chris Lee Well Nick, thanks again for coming. Any final thoughts?

Captain Nick Bolander Yeah, a couple of things I'd like to hit on just kind of close everything out is, you've heard us over the last few months, as we've done our preparation to go into negotiations, now we've done our opener, is talking about getting your financial house in order and unity and what all this means. Right now we've had record amounts of draft, AVA, and we hope that pilots are putting themselves in a financial position to be able to move forward in negotiations because there is going to become a time in negotiations

where some tough decisions financially may have to be made. The other thing I'll mention is stay informed. We talked about numerous areas during this podcast where to go to get the information on negotiations. There are numerous communications that come out, whether it's these podcasts, written communications, pub calls, LEC meetings. Try to get involved and doing a few of those and staying informed. And then lastly, as I talked earlier about, is unity. We've really got to get together as a pilot group. It's a massive, massive task to go get what we're asking for. I can say unequivocally that what we're asking for is something that the pilot group could be proud of. The person on the other side of the table may not want to do that. And so we've got to be ready to have that unity when the time is called upon for us to be able to do the things that we may be asked to do. We are in negotiations. The time is now. We must get engaged. We must get unified because the other side wants more work out of you. They want you to work more for less. They want more of your free time to be their time and they don't want to pay you any extra for it.

Captain Chris Lee Thanks Nick, and thanks for listening. If you have any questions, go to our website, fdx.alpa.org and utilize the [DART link](#) and as always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.