

# Aviation Executive Monthly

Frank Jay & Associates – Airline, Aviation and Aerospace Executive Search



## Will Southwest Airlines Survive?, by Frank M. Jay

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 we published an article entitled “Airline Merger Merry-Go-Round” as part of our monthly newsletter. That article stated that the potential JetBlue acquisition of Spirit Airlines could indicate the beginning of airline mergers...in all segments of the market...once again.

Our article proposed that even the largest airlines...considered to be “major airlines...could be reduced from four (United Airlines, Delta Airlines, American Airlines, and Southwest Airlines) down to three...and then to two...within a decade.

Although at the time we didn’t include our thoughts in that article, we believed that Southwest Airlines would survive to be one of the “three” major carriers, and then time would tell how things would go from there.

Now, one year later, we question whether Southwest might be the first current “major” airline to succumb to an acquisition process.

Our thinking, based on what we read and what we know of the U.S. aviation industry, is that Southwest has become an airline without a niche. We believe that, with the development of the “ultra low cost carrier” industry segment, that the airline industry has expanded to the point that Southwest’s part of the market has been left behind...that there is no need for an airline of Southwest’s size that is stuck between the ULCC segment and the Major airline segment...and that Southwest potentially faces reduced passengers and revenue.

We certainly could be wrong. Or, the airline could change its direction and become a “different” type of airline completely. It could do so in a number of different ways. It could “rebrand” and become an ULCC airline and compete with Allegiant, Frontier, etc. Or, it could be the acquirer of another major airline (American, United, or Delta) which again would change Southwest’s direction in the industry.

*(Continued on Page 4...)*

## On The Move

**AAR Corp.** named *Andrew Schmidt* Senior VP of AAR Digital Services and Trax. Schmidt was previously Managing Director for Seabury Capital. *Troy Primus* was promoted from VP Operations to GM/Accountable Manager in Chicago.

**AerSale** hired *David Melone*, previously VP Operations for Mark Aero LLC, as Director of Engine Product Line.

**Airlines for America** announced that *Kevin Welsh* will be joining as VP of Environment and Chief Sustainability Officer. Welsh was previously with the FAA, where he most recently served as the Executive Director of the Office of Environment and Energy.

**Air Transport Services Group (ATSG)** promoted *David Ray* from Chief Operating Officer to President of Omni Air International (OAI).

**Allegiant** promoted *Michelle Cohen* from Managing Director, Station Operations and Performance to VP, Operations Performance and Stations. *Jawaid Shaikh*, VP Procurement, announced his retirement.

**Archer Aviation** appointed Uber Elevate co-founder, *Nikhil Goel*, Chief Commercial Officer.

**Avelo Airlines** named *Jason Applegate*, previously with American Airlines, Endeavor Air and Delta Air Lines, as Manager, Inflight. *Paul Gee* joined as Manager, Technical Operations Planning.

**Bamboo Airways** Chief Executive *Nguyen Minh Hai* resigned from his post after two months.

**Boeing** hired *Lisa Jones* as Senior Manager-Boeing Phantom Works, and *Joe Wallet* was promoted from Manager, Strategic Contracts to Manager, Government Repairs Supplier Performance.

**Delta Air Lines** promoted *Marc Beck* from Manager-Domestic Pricing Strategy to GM-Latin America & Caribbean Pricing and Performance Analysis.

**Eastern Airlines** promoted *Brian Newhart* from Chief Pilot to Director of Operations. *Vince Portaro* was promoted from Director Airport & Cargo Services to VP Flight Operations.

**Embark Aviation** announced that *Michelle Johnson* joined as Vice President. Johnson was previously Sr Director with Royal Caribbean Group, and spent four years at Delta Air Lines.

**Embraer** announced that *Carlos Naufel*, current Technical Director of Azul Linhas Aereas, will be the new VP of Services & Support.

**Envoy Air** announced that *Sidney Babin* has been named GM Chattanooga. VP HR & Employment Counsel, *Chanen Lively*, was recognized by the Fort Worth Business Press in their 40 Under 40 program.

**Eve Air Mobility** named *Johann Bordais* CEO, replacing co-chief executives *Andre Stein* and *Jerry DeMuro*, both of whom will remain with the company in new positions. Bordais was previously President and CEO of Embraer Services and Support.

**FedEx Corp** announced that *John Dietrich*, former CEO of Atlas Air, has joined as EVP and CFO, replacing *Michael C. Lenz*.

**Flexport** promoted long-time American Airlines Finance professional *David Novi* from Head of SMB & Ocean Consolidation Finance to Head of Finance, Ocean Business.

**Flight Safety Foundation** awarded *Bob Agostino*, VP of American Aero FTW at Fort Worth Meacham International Airport, with its Business Aviation Meritorious Service Award.

**FlyDocs** hired *Naveen Mangle* as Chief Digital and Technology Officer.

**Frontier Airlines** *Jake Filene*, Senior VP Customers, left the company and became Partner with OurCirrus, LLC. The company promoted *Scott Candelmo* from GM Fort Myers to Regional Manager, Airport Sales & Operations. *Mike Janssen* has been promoted from Manager of Inspection/Assistant Chief Inspector to Director, Regional Line Maintenance (Central). *Leo Ojeda* was hired as Manager, Airport Sales and Operations-DFW.

**General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA)** has strengthened its team in Europe, announcing appointments to its Brussels office. *Peter Marton* is joining as director of European government affairs and *Cate Brancart* has been promoted to director of European safety and sustainability development.

## On The Move *(continued)*

**Global Airlines** has appointed *Pierre Madrange* and *Ian Black* to its advisory board. *Liam McKay*, previously Director of Corporate Affairs at London City Airport, has joined the airline as International Corporate Affairs Director.

**Global Crossing Airlines** promoted *Cathleen Kelly Pocos* from Manager of MINT Administration to Director of Flight Operations Training and Mint Administration.

**Greenwich AeroGroup** promoted *Jonathan Clarke* from VP / General Manager of Greenwich AeroGroup subsidiary Professional Aircraft Accessories to President of subsidiary Precision Aviation Group.

**Honeywell** moved *Tom Smiley* from Global Head of HR & Communications for Safety & Productivity Solutions to Global Head of HR, Field Operations.

**Hospitio Consulting & Professional Services** hired *Sotos Roumaniotis* as Senior Consultant Revenue and Operations Optimization.

**IBS Software** promoted *Sam Shukla* from VP to Senior VP for the Americas Region.

**ITA Airways** CEO *Fabrizio Lazzerini* has stepped down while the current head of alliances, fleet and network, *Andrea Benassi*, has been appointed General Manager. The ITA board has been reduced from five to three-member board, including *Antonio Turicchi* as chair.

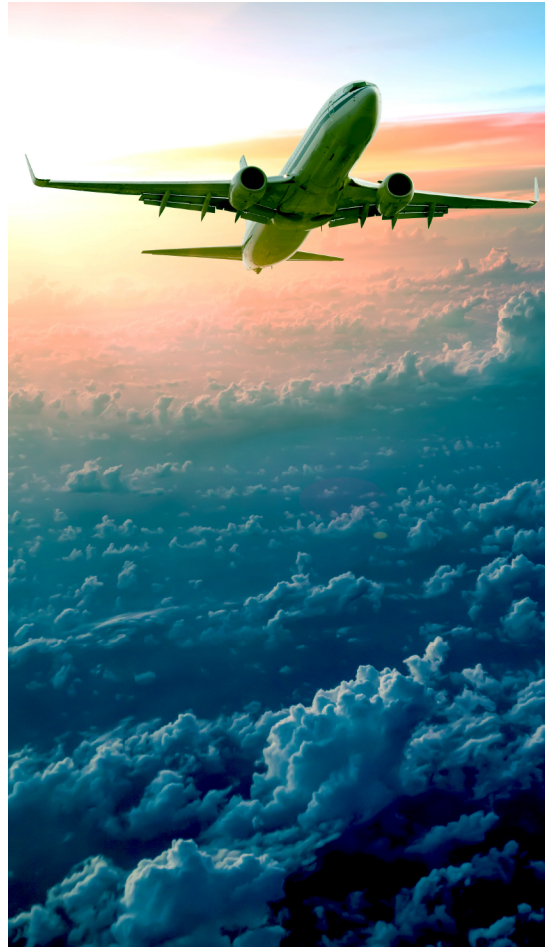
**Jet2** founder *Philip Meeson* is planning to move to the role of non-executive chair by end of year.

**JetBlue** has appointed *Susan Pflugstler*, previously MD, network operations, air traffic control strategy for United Airlines, as VP JetBlue University.

**Jetstream Ground Services** recruited *Erik Olund*, previously with Caliber Collision, and long-time AA/US MD and Director, as Chief Operating Officer.

**The Landline Company** promoted *Nick Johnson* from Head of Revenue and Network Planning to Vice President-Head of Revenue.

**Lockheed Martin** hired *Levent Kaan*, previously Associate Director of Development Programs for Raytheon Intelligence & Space, as Senior Manager, Operations Engineering.



**LSG Group** promoted *Joyce Nash*, previously Human Resources Director-East, to Director of Training and Development.

**Lufthansa** promoted *Nicole Mies* as the new Head of Communications and Corporate Social Responsibility for Lufthansa Cargo, succeeding *Jacqueline Casini*. Mies was previously Senior Director Customer Strategy for the Lufthansa Group airlines.

**Mesa Airlines** hired *Steven Smith*, previously Senior Manager, Line & Heavy Maintenance for Eastern Airlines, as Senior Director Technical Operations. *Andrew Lotter*, previously VP Operations for Omni Air International, joined as VP Flight Operations.

**NBAA** named General Lloyd “Fig” Newton to the newly created position of chair emeritus on the NBAA Board of Directors. *Chris Strong*, previously SVP of Events, retired from the association.

**PHI Aviation** named *Jake Sifers* Director, Business Development-SE Asia.

## On The Move *(continued)*

**Philippine Airlines** hired *Anna Isabel Bengzon* as Chief Financial Officer. She was previously CFO for GBP in the Philippines.

**Pratt & Whitney** promoted *Jacelyn Lopez* to Executive Director Commercial Engines Quality.

**PrimeFlight Aviation Services** named former Swissport Senior VP and COO Fueling, *Stan Livingston*, as VP, Sales and Customer Support.

**Raytheon** has promoted *Adaora Nelson* from VP Quality & Product Safety at Raytheon Missiles & Defense to VP of Quality & Mission Assurance at Raytheon. *Kyle Evans* was hired as Sr Manager FP&A.

**Sabre Corporation** promoted *Mirko Congiu* from Principal Delivery Systems Engineer to Manager Delivery Systems Engineer in Zurich.

**Signature Aviation** hired *Brett Langsdorf*, previously VP Airport Operations at JetStream Ground Services, as GM Dallas. *Michael Sasse* joined as VP-Workforce Optimization. Sasse was previously MD Inflight Crew Resourcing for United Airlines.

**Southwest Airlines** promoted *Dean Jenkins* from Managing Director and Assistant Treasurer to VP Treasurer. *Daniel Jean* joined as Aircraft Maintenance Supervisor. Southwest's Board expanded with the appointment of *Roy Blunt*, to go along with *Jill Soltau*, *Eduardo Conrado*, and *Elaine Mendoza* earlier in 2023.

**Spirit Airlines** - *Jordan Wareham* was promoted from Senior Director Regulatory Compliance and 119 Director of Safety to Senior Director Operational Safety / 119 Director of Safety.

**Sun Country Airlines** promoted *Casey Potter* from Assistant Chief Pilot to Base Chief Pilot. *Daniel Hillgartner*, previously Manager, Fleet Programs and Strategy for JetBlue, joined Sun Country as Director, Fleet and Fuel.

**Swissport** promoted *Nelson Camacho* from Chief Operating Officer-North America to Chief Executive Officer-North America. He replaces *Frank Mena*, who is retiring. *Stacey Brown* has been hired as Chief People Officer-North America. She was previously CHRO for First Hospitality in Chicago.

**The Parking Spot** promoted former Gogo Senior VP and UA Managing Director, *Tim O'Malley*, from Chief Revenue Officer to President and CEO.

**United Airlines** named Bank of America Merrill Lynch Senior Equity Analyst *Ronald Epstein* as Technical Advisor for United Airlines Ventures on eVTOL, electric, sustainable, airframe and propulsion technologies. *Vincent Giudice*, previously Director of Maintenance at Amerijet International, joined UA as Director-Overhaul, Airframe & Repairs. *Jennifer Schwierzke* was promoted from Chief of Staff to the COO to VP Customer Strategy & Innovation.

**Virgin Australia** named *James Liu* Senior Manager Network Strategy. He joins from Lufthansa Systems, where he was Senior Management Consultant.

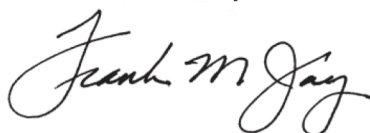
**WestJet** named *Michael Scott* Executive VP and Chief Financial Officer. Scott was previously CFO at StandardAero in Winnipeg. *Travis Brassington* was promoted from Manager Line Operations and Pilot Selection Team to VP Group Safety.

## Will Southwest Airlines Survive? *(continued from page 1)*

The point is that we believe that Southwest currently faces a "market" issue...and that has not been their case since the company was founded on the basis of "lower fares", low costs, exceptional service, and heavy capacity to key airports. They no longer provide the lowest fares. They now serve domestic locations throughout the U.S. and they provide service that is no longer dramatically better than their major airline competitors. In our opinion, the first point (low fares) and the last point (better service) are the "telling" ones.

What their "next step" will be remains to be seen.

Sincerely,



## Contact

---



**Frank Jay**  
Managing Partner  
713.875.5949  
fjay@frankjayassoc.net



**Steve Jay**  
Partner & Executive  
Search Consultant  
713.875.5952  
sjay@frankjayassoc.net

## About Frank Jay & Associates

Established in 1985, Frank Jay & Associates is the world's leading provider of retained executive search in the Airline, Aviation and Aerospace industries.

Since our beginning, Frank Jay & Associates has operated as a trusted adviser and strategic partner working with clients to evolve, upgrade and facilitate senior-level executive search for Airline, Aviation and Aerospace companies, ranging from major global, regional, international, cargo and related airlines, to Private and Corporate Aviation operators, Aerospace Manufacturers, and all of the companies that support these industries, including MRO operators, Ground Handlers, and others.

We work broadly across the Airline, Aviation and Aerospace landscape with specific expertise in recruiting senior leaders for operational

and functional areas that include finance, marketing, planning, flight operations, inflight, maintenance, manufacturing, engineering, and related areas. We also partner with private equity firms and the companies in their portfolios to execute pre-deal and post-deal acquisition talent and leadership initiatives. Due to our unique access to the most impactful and future-minded executives across the Airline, Aviation and Aerospace landscape, we are able to help our clients assemble teams that create impactful legacies.

