

The Continental-United Merger

The intention of airline mergers is always to reduce overall seat capacity, lower costs and raise ticket prices. The Continental-United merger, if approved, will be no different.

However, one positive result of the merger could be to bring all passenger service and fleet service workers under the umbrella of one union, the IAM. Represented by the IAM, fleet service workers (baggage handlers) number around 8,000 at United. Some 7,600 fleet service workers at Continental are members of the Teamsters. The IAM also represents 8,100 passenger service workers (reservation and customer service agents) at United. A smaller number of Continental passenger service workers are non union.

Once the new carrier achieves single carrier status, union representation elections will almost certainly take place for these groups. If the IAM is successful in these elections, all ground workers at the largest airline in the world would be in the same union. This would give them enormous leverage to regain what has been lost over the past decade.

Now take this a step further. If the IAM is successful in winning union elections at Delta for the passenger service and fleet service groups, airline workers' leverage to negotiate industry leading contracts for the two biggest airlines in the world will be unprecedented. With this kind of power, the "race to the bottom" could be reversed.

Some 9,500 flight attendants at Continental are in the Machinists Union, while 16,000 United flight attendants are AFA members. A vote to determine who will represent the combined flight attendants group will likely take place as well.

Long Term Disability

Delta Policy - In Delta's Human Resources Practices Manual the Long Term Disability Leave Program is outlined. The Manual says, "Delta reserves the right to modify or terminate any leaves or any leave policy at any time."

It goes on to explain that Delta pays 50% of the income the employee was making when they became ill or injured. There is a 26 week waiting period if approved by Sedgewick CMS. The employee is eligible to continue medical insurance. An employee can receive up to 6 months of LTD with possible extensions.

If you are out for more than 12 months, Delta does not have to hold a position open for you. If no position is available, you have a maximum of 90 days to find another position within the Company.

IAM Contractual Guarantees - In the IAM contract LTD coverage is outlined. Leaves and leave policies cannot be changed unilaterally by the Company.

Workers covered by an IAM contract receive 66.6% of their income when ill or injured. There is a 12 week waiting period. An IAM member can receive up to 3 years of coverage with extensions available. Insurance coverage continues. When an employee returns to work from LTD, their position is still there.

If a 10 year PMDL employee was injured in an auto accident and was unable to work for 7 months, they would receive one month LTD and might have to face months with no pay before LTD kicked in. A PMNW employee would receive 4 months LTD and likely face little or no time unpaid because of superior sick and OJI accruals.