By: Brad Ravish
US Airways
Reservations, PHX

I started with America West in 1997 when it was a barely known #9 carrier. After years in reservations I was still making under $9/hour, so I could only work part-time and have a job bartending to make ends meet.

When we voted against representation the first time it was devastating. We lost vacation, benefits, flexibility, basically everything management said would happen if we voted for the union.

But we learned our lesson, so in 2004 we voted for a voice at work with the Teamsters.

A few years later, a suit came to my bar and we got to chatting. Turns out he worked for an outsourcing firm that had been hired by the airline to scout our call center for outsourcing if we hadn’t won the election.

Instead, because of the US Airways and America West merger, we formed the CWA-IBT Association and voted to take up the existing CWA contract.

Suddenly, we had standardized policies and enforcement. No more arbitrary firings and blatant favoritism. No more struggling just to get by.

The biggest changes though, were the ones I didn’t think any of us thought possible.

Dealing with unhappy customers is part of the job. But at America West, the policy was the customer can say whatever they want and you have to take it. Women and men would get phone calls that transcended disagreeableness to become blatant sexual harassment, and if they hung up, no matter how troubling the language, they’d be automatically disciplined.

Regardless of position or station, talking with future co-workers makes a difference and is a key to our election.

With a union, we were able to stand up for our dignity and that insane discipline policy went out the door.

Recently, I went to a meet and greet for folks from both carriers put on by Trish Muir (pictured below). And I’ve got to say that when I shared my stories about the difference between union and no-union jaws dropped.

At American Airlines folks have been mistreated for so long it is easy to lose hope it can be better, at US Airways we’ve had protections for so long it’s hard to imagine living without them. The best thing we can do is talk to each other, that’s the only way we can make sure that everyone votes for the CWA-IBT Association.

With Representation You Never Have to Fight Alone Again

By: Laura Crosley
US Airways
CSS, IND

A few years back, a friend and coworker was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was hard, we all rallied and tried to support her during radiation and chemotherapy, but there’s only so much you can do. Management didn’t even seem to try though.

She used up her sick leave and was taking FMLA to have time for treatment. Unfortunately, local supervisors didn’t let her know her leave was running out, they just started marking her absent until all of a sudden she was demoted.

So, we rallied around her again, except instead of friends supporting a difficult diagnosis this time we were union stewards and activists collectively fighting an unjust decision. We got her discipline overturned, old position reinstated and worked with the managers to make sure such a boneheaded application of the rules doesn’t happen again.

After 34 years with US Airways, I’ve had my issues with management, but with support from our union I’ve been able to weather them and move forward.

One of my best experiences over the years was the CWA National Convention, where I got to meet leaders and activists from different states and sectors. Meeting people and hearing organizing/bargaining strategies was great, but the real highlight was the incredible sense of solidarity.

It’s easy to get mired down in our airline industry struggles, but the convention reminded me that there’s a whole country out there with workers struggling to win their voice on the job. That even if things aren’t perfect, we have so much to be thankful for.

When I get new employees at the station the first thing to do is walk them through the contract and explain the benefits. Because after living through the days before we had representation, I never want to go back.

And honestly, that’s made me a little scared about this merger. After three decades I have a strong connection to the US Airways brand, and while I’m excited about the opportunities of being the largest airline, I am very concerned about the possibility of losing CWA-IBT representation.

We sacrificed for years to bring US Airways back to profitability, and I want my chance to share in that profit and have a voice.

Everyone I know at US Airways is planning to vote YES for representation, but we need strong support from everyone at American Airlines too. It’s time for agents and representatives to realize how life changing it can be when your union has your back.

I believe our voice is stronger together. And that’s why I’m voting YES for the CWA-IBT Association.
Our Voice Needs to be Heard

By: Tammy Woods
American Airlines
Customer Service Agent, DFW

As Chair of the Agent Advisory Board, I was invited to Doug Parker’s quarterly meeting with union leaders, including the CWA-IBT Association, to hear the earnings report. Doug Parker’s leadership team also attended.

The professionalism of the CWA/IBT representatives who brought up issues that were not being handled at a local level was impressive. At one point, they even corrected a comment Doug Parker had made at a town hall meeting that ended up on video. They wanted him to know that the agents at American did not “vote” to outsource airport jobs.

This time was well spent in opening avenues of communication between management and front-line work groups and in getting various operational issues out in the open. Communication between members and union leaders and between union leaders and management appears to be good. The union leaders showed me that walls can be broken down and avenues opened up for our voice to be heard at the new American Airlines.

In addition to the report, the meeting provided an opportunity for front line employees to present operational issues that require immediate attention directly to the leadership team without red tape or the possibility of repercussions. It also provided information directly from the top for union leaders to share with their members, avoiding the subtle changes that may occur when information is filtered through a several levels of management.

“The company uses the board to placate agents but not to support us.”
-Ken Merker, MIA, former AAB co-chair

We All Deserve a Real Seat at the Table to Decide Our Future

By: Velvet Hawthorne
US Airways
CWA Staff Representative

It was great to see the support Tammy gave us in the meeting when we spoke about the vendor issues we are having in many of our airports.

The issues we raised rang a similar note to the non-union workers regarding the vendors that were hired to replace many of Tammy’s coworkers at the airport and now work side by side with the seasoned agents.

The customer service issues were varied, but the same message was expressed from across the country, the contractors are just not trained or engaged enough to give the type of service the customer is used to in the airport.

These meetings have been instrumental to making meaningful changes. Hearing from front-line employees gives Mr. Parker and his team the chance to directly address any problems they didn’t realize were happening.

With the CWA-IBT Association, we still have local committees in each location who work with management on things like schedules, health and safety and charitable groups, we just also have a national voice.

I’ve worked with management on behalf of CWA for a number of years now, and we’ve by and large had a good working relationship. But when it comes down to it, they’re there to grow the company’s bottom line.

If we want to guarantee a secure future for agents and reps at the new American Airlines we need to do more than just hope management decides to be nice, we need to win our election for CWA-IBT Association representation.

International Workers’ Day
Have your cake and eat it too

May 1st celebrates International Workers’ Day, a recognition of the immense strides made by workers in the late 19th century as they fought for basic rights on the job. The date was chosen to commemorate the 1886 Haymarket Affair in Chicago, where 4 protesters in favor of the 8 hour work day were killed by police during a general strike.

At American Airlines, many of us have been working towards representation for decades, but for all of our struggles it’s important to remember the context. Workers have sacrificed, and at times given their lives, to guarantee the rights we today take for granted: bathroom breaks, the right to organize, days off...

We are heir to the incredible legacy of organized labor, now it’s our turn to take up that mantle and advance rights for ourselves and workers world wide.

“Instead of an avenue to express our different opinions and ideas, these committees were ineffective at dealing with the big issues.”
-Annette Rocco, BDL, former AAB member