

Grasping The Value Of Diversity In Tough Times

by Donald J. Carty, Chairman and CEO, American Airlines

(NAPS)—American Airlines has learned some important lessons during a period of unprecedented challenge in America. Foremost among them is the realization that having in place a set of core values and principles provides a critical guidepost at times of adversity.



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American's values and principles are embodied in our Airline Leadership Plan, which stresses six areas—Safety, Service, Network, Technology, Product and Culture. By orienting every decision around our goal of leadership in those areas, we have a roadmap for recovery that keeps us focused on our customers, our employees and our shareholders.

The spirit, talent and dedication of American's people have helped us get through some of our darkest days. It is clearly our people who make American work, so we set out several years ago to ensure that American continued to be a great place to work.

We have discovered an unexpected richness in tapping the divergent views of people of all races, genders, national origins and lifestyles—all pulling toward the same goals.

Diversity, however, has its challenges. Although we won dozens of awards for our workplace policies and programs, and have been recognized for the involvement of our employees and our Diversity Advisory Council, much remains to be done.

We have seen small pockets of resistance from a very few people. Even in this day and age, I hear isolated reports of employees coming to work to find distasteful affronts to their race, their religion, their national origin, their gender, disability or sexual orien-

tation. We have consistently disciplined and often terminated people for these behaviors, but we have not been able to wholly remove this vestige of unpleasantness from the workplace.

So, a couple of weeks ago, we adopted a more aggressive approach. We will go beyond our already strong measures to more clearly explain—and aggressively enforce—our zero-tolerance policies. The rules and regulations have been rewritten and we will fire people for hate-related behavior regardless of their tenure or their work record.

We pledge to turn the egregious cases over to law enforcement authorities for criminal prosecution if necessary.

To implement these policies, we will train 10,000 managers and supervisors by year-end and have asked four highly respected and nationally recognized members of our Board of Directors to help monitor our progress. This is unprecedented in the airline industry—no airline board has been asked to take such an active role. We have asked our unions to join in this important measure.

Some people may ask why we are directing resources to cultural issues when we remain under financial pressure from the Sept. 11 attacks.

The answer is evident. Even in tough times—perhaps especially in tough times—no company can lose sight of its values. At American, we will not allow the progress we've made to be damaged or diminished by this behavior.

For more than 76 years, people of all backgrounds, races, religions, national origins and life experiences have made American successful. Everyone deserves a safe, harassment-free place to work. We're committed to having that place at American—that's what leadership is all about.