

- Piedmont is already hiring!
- Minimum 12 new pilots per class expected throughout 2021...more with attrition?
- Career Advancement Program.

On June 16, 2021 Troy Merrit (NGPA's Vice President) met with Lynnette Darnell (Senior Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and Tyler Tenbrink (Director of Talent Acquisition and Development) to discuss Piedmont Airlines.

Piedmont had to pivot during the pandemic, but their marketing team came up with a great "Cope"ing Strategy to get them through.

- C- Control cost
- O- Operate safely
- P- Preserve jobs
- E- Earn customer confidence

They didn't waste a good crisis...so the saying goes and some advice passed on by a previous VP. Hiring came to a halt but they were able to control costs through reduced lines and early outs. They restructured the company, combined departments, and focused on their HR programs. They had a fleet of 60 ERJ-145s pre-pandemic and were fortunate to park only 5 aging aircraft. They also added new routes and spent a lot of their unanticipated down time on Piedmont Ground Handling which accounts for almost 3/4 their company. Piedmont, contrary to some beliefs, is a not-so-small company of over 10,000 employees. They currently have 666 pilots on their seniority list with most recent being a 3/15/2021 hire.

When American Airlines cut routes and lines of flying, they cut capacity too. Though primarily an East Coast short-hop carrier, Piedmont jumped at the opportunity to expand into the Chicago area in the dead of winter. They took flying and proving runs with stride. They successfully launched Piedmont Ground Handling operations in DCA and expanded PHX by 300 new agents. This was an opportunity for them to really focus on their diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts as well. Lynnette had a wonderful presentation outlining the steps they have taken since 2019.

As a wholly owned American Airlines subsidiary, their lines of flying (not the same lines some aviation professionals are used to bidding) were cut from about 53 pre-pandemic to 23 in October 2020. While they felt the impact, they encouraged their employees to cut hours, take a leave of absence or early out, and were able to preserve all pilot positions. There were zero furloughs. They are already nearing pre-pandemic flying with 48 lines of flying for June and July and expect to hit the 53 mark by November.

What does this mean for you? They are hiring! They have 12 new pilots joining in July and another 12 in August. They expect to have at least this many pilots per class throughout 2021 and potentially more in Q3 and Q4 due to attrition. They are looking for well-rounded individuals, want to know what is in your background other than flying, and are asking candidates to be current and ready to fly. If you are not current, is there anything you can do to get there? Competition is fierce and Tyler still believes there is a pilot shortage. Once you are in the door, you will find this is a workplace where employees consider themselves lifelong friends.

They highly touted their career advancement program and called it the bread-and-butter for your career. You must have 350 hours, commercial ratings, and a plan to build your flight time. ATP/CTP is not a requirement for consideration. As a cadet candidate, you will interview once and will eventually flow through to American. While they cannot pinpoint a timeframe, pre-pandemic flow-through from Piedmont to American was about 5-6 years. This program is currently being revamped with a new contract that will mirror the previous one. They have the money and resources to help you from start to finish, but this is a risk to them. What do you bring to the table?