

NEW UNITED AIRLINES CEO VOWS END TO DISUNITY IN EMPLOYEE LETTER

News / Airlines



The new chief executive officer of United Continental Holdings Inc. pledged to unite a divided workforce by consulting with affected employees before adopting any cost cuts and by scrutinizing the use of outside management consultants.

Oscar Munoz urged employees to "come with me" in a personal letter on Friday that didn't announce major personnel or policy changes. He said he's heard their skepticism in meetings over the past two weeks since replacing ousted CEO Jeff Smisek.

Munoz's letter related workers' frustration at the company's spotty performance in recent years, including an anecdote from a 25-year-veteran flight attendant who was near tears as she told him she was "tired of having to tell people I'm sorry."

"I recognize that the journey hasn't always been smooth and it won't be fixed in a day," Munoz said. "This is a marathon with a running start. I'm ready to take this team forward. It's time for a new day. Come with me."

Munoz became United's president and CEO on Sept. 8, after Smisek resigned amid a government probe into the company's dealings with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Munoz previously served as president and chief operating officer of railroad giant CSX Corp.

At United, he's challenged to fix some of the glitches in the 2010 merger of UAL Corp. and Continental Airlines. That includes completing unified labor agreements with flight attendants and mechanics, and improving a computer infrastructure that has caused United's fleet to be grounded twice this summer.

"We've heard that you want to be empowered to do good work with effective tools," Munoz wrote. "We will give you the right tools to deliver the service and reliability I know we are capable of."

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