



# Enduring brands

## – flying high despite the recession

By Michelle Boyde

International travel, the jet set, innovation – the aviation industry has always exuded glamour and interest. However, against a backdrop of recession, diminishing business travel and debated carbon dioxide emissions, can it continue to be an industry of choice for students and young talent? Despite these challenges the answer is a resounding yes. Aviation employers have chosen to confront these obstacles head-on, turning their nemesis into a tool for strengthening their recruiting efforts. Long-term employer branding commitment, even when recruiting has slowed, is the primary reason they boast such durable employer brands. Five aviation employers shared some of their brand building tactics with *Universum Quarterly*. Time will, of course, be the judge, but these employers are confident the aviation industry will retain its popularity.

**Airbus - turn an issue into a cause for innovation**

Taking the issue of environmental impact and using it to strengthen relationships is an approach pursued by Airbus, one of the world's leading aircraft manufacturers.

The global student contest, Fly Your Ideas (FYI), is one example of how it is turning an issue into a cause for innovation. FYI challenged teams of students to generate ideas to further improve eco-efficiency in the aviation industry.

"Aviation is a very visible industry and has a high profile in environmental discussions," said Rachel Schroeder, head of employment marketing at Airbus. "One objective was to create a platform to communicate and correct misperceptions while sharing information about what our industry has done to reduce its environmental impact."

Beyond dispelling myths about the industry's environmental impact, Airbus hoped to engage with students who will be the future of the industry. Over 2,300 students registered to take part in the contest. They came from 82 countries and across 130 universities. Most students came from an engineering, technical and science background, although ten per cent were from non-engineering education.

The nine month contest required significant time investment, but this has paid dividends, creating positive outputs.

"We conducted follow-up research at the end to identify what the students got from the experience," Schroeder explained. "There were two main reasons people took part: an interest in aviation and an interest in Airbus."

The contest put Airbus in direct contact with young talent interested in their sector and them as an employer. The interaction was positive for students and many commented they enjoyed meeting Airbus employees and management.

"It was not a recruiting activity, but when we asked who was interested in staying in touch with Airbus for information on jobs or internships, 100 per cent of finalists said yes and some have applied and been offered positions," Schroeder said.

The universities were also closely involved, with each team responsible for identifying an intellectual sponsor from the university. They helped team members define the methodology and resources needed to complete the project, as well as support the team more broadly by challenging them at each stage of their proposal.

Although Airbus' main recruitment target is engineers, it hopes to expand contacts with other talent groups as well as populations they wish to attract more of: "We are interested in increasing the female population," Schroeder said. "Twenty per cent of contestants who participate in FYI were female and 50 per cent of

teams had women in them – next time we will aim even higher."

If Schroeder could offer advice to anyone looking to undertake a similar initiative: "Do not underestimate how much work it is. Nevertheless, we are convinced of the benefits of such a challenge which is why we are planning to launch a second edition of Fly Your Ideas in September 2010."

*"We are still out on campus, as in three years time, when students graduate and the crisis is behind us, we will want that talent."*

– Christoph Fay, Head of HR, Marketing and Talent Sourcing, Deutsche Lufthansa, Frankfurt, Germany

**Deutsche Lufthansa – transparency fuelled by continuous brand development**

Deutsche Lufthansa is the world's fifth largest airline and the largest in Europe in terms of passengers carried. It boasts a solid financial background, but like many businesses in the current economic climate it has scaled back recruitment.

"We are not hiring cabin crew and pilots, there are some positions available on our programmes and we are still interested in management talent," explained Christoph Fay, head of HR, marketing and talent sourcing at Deutsche Lufthansa. "We are openly communicating this, but we are still out on campus as in three years time, when students graduate, and the crisis is behind us, we will want that talent."

This is perhaps the key to why Deutsche Lufthansa is so popular with students: a consistent and persistent approach to their employer brand. Since actively beginning their work with employer branding in 2000, they have ensured that talent never loses interest in what they have to offer.

Interestingly, now is the time they are further investing in their employer brand. I was interested to know if their popularity stemmed from their position as a national brand. However, this is what they are currently trying to move away from.

"We are building a new employer brand for Europe," Fay explained. "It started last year and is now in its operational phase. You will see the picture forming this year and the whole picture in three years time."

The three-year strategy is based on the strong product brand: "The outside perception of Deutsche Lufthansa is very close to the internal reality," Fay said. "Our concept is to show our customers and employees these values so they can see what we are – this works well for us."

However, the Deutsche Lufthansa employer brand has its sights set beyond Europe. Their



**Rachel Schroeder**  
Head of Employment Marketing,  
Airbus, Toulouse, France

**Airbus** is a leading aircraft manufacturer with the most modern and comprehensive family of airliners on the market, ranging in capacity from 100 to more than 500 seats. Over 9,300 Airbus aircrafts have been sold to more than 300 customers worldwide and more than 5,900 of these have been delivered since the company first entered the market in the early seventies. Airbus is an EADS company.

**Headquarters:** Toulouse, France  
**Employees:** 52,000



**Christoph Fay**  
Head of HR, Marketing and Talent Sourcing,  
Deutsche Lufthansa, Frankfurt, Germany

**Deutsche Lufthansa** is Europe's most successful airline and one of the largest worldwide. The Lufthansa Aviation Group includes 400 subsidiary and affiliated companies.

**Headquarters:** Cologne, Germany  
**Employees:** 107,000



**Bud Fishback**  
Senior Manager College Programs,  
Boeing, Seattle, WA, US

**Boeing** is the world's leading aerospace company and the largest manufacturer of commercial jetliners and military aircraft combined. Additionally, Boeing designs and manufactures rotorcraft, electronic and defense systems, missiles, satellites, launch vehicles and advanced information and communication systems.

**Headquarters:** Chicago, Illinois, US  
**Employees:** 158,000

international branding initiative sees them visit the US and Asia. Driven by the need to form diverse teams, this initiative is supported by a connection to leading universities and excellent networks.

In response to their employer brand development, they have experienced a 10-20 per cent increase in demand on the online platform.

“This is not as dynamic as experienced in the IT sector,” Fay admitted. “But for us this is certainly still growing.”

**Southwest Airlines – built on a foundation of eco-responsibility**

Southwest Airlines is a major domestic US airline, which bases its employer brand on an eco-friendly history and community spirit which engages all generations. The strength of its internal culture delivers financial benefits of a low turnover and long tenure.

“Southwest has been environmentally friendly since the outset,” said Greg Muccio, team leader employment at Southwest Airlines. “Southwest is the airline that invented ticketless travel – the first for online booking,” Muccio continued.

However, due to the ‘cause’ mentality of 21-23 year-olds, Muccio explained that Southwest Airlines has stepped-up its reporting processes to communicate all its environmentally friendly initiatives to employees and external stakeholders.

“We do lots of internal work regarding recycling and offer tips on how to work as ‘green’ individuals. We have ‘Green Team Members’ who aim to ensure we have a green filter on business decisions,” Muccio explained.

Environmental responsibility appeals directly to Millennial talent, however, it is the longstanding culture at Southwest Airlines that allows the employer brand to reach out to all age groups. Their culture is built from the inside out and has a strong ripple effect out to schools, to support a strong campus brand. Integral to their strategy are culture committees. Placed in each department, these are responsible for keeping the culture of that specific department alive through events and other initiatives. Furthermore, a company culture department is also in place.

“You have to be nominated to be part of that [company culture department] and they meet with senior leadership,” Muccio explained. “Some of these are retired Southwest folk, it’s interesting because it is still important to them and they do not want the culture to die even after they have left the company.”

There are a number of community initiatives that fit under their Share the Spirit umbrella, including their corporate charity, Ronald McDonald Homes. This is a children’s hospital for those who need severe treatment. It is sup-

ported by Golf Classic, the second largest golf competition in the Dallas area.

“This came about from one of our original pilots whose child had cancer,” Muccio explained. “We are a cause not a company,” Muccio concluded.

**American Airlines – the challenges help identify the ‘right’ people**

American Airlines (AA) is the world’s second largest commercial passenger airline, which perceives questions on campus as constructive.

“Candidates always ask about our environmental sustainability and corporate citizenship efforts, so a couple of years ago we began preparing our hiring managers to answer these questions, because we believe we have a good track record in these areas,” said William Mitchell, managing director - leadership planning & performance at AA. “But we see this as something positive as it helps us find the right people, those who are already aware of these issues. They like a challenge, a dynamic environment and importantly, they are going in with their eyes open,” Mitchell continued.

Importantly, the talk is backed up with action. New 737-800 aircrafts with improved emissions features are being added to the fleet and the older generation retired. Additionally, all drinks cans from flights are recycled. Last year AA recycled 10 million cans, which equates to about 320,000 pounds.

For AA, the ‘right’ people are those who are passionate about travel and the airline industry, and Mitchell explains they are easier to find than you may think: “Due to young talent being more global in their perspective, they are drawn to a career in travel,” Mitchell explained.

AA’s college recruiting branding statement, One Company, Many Destinations, appeals to Millennial talent and has a two-fold meaning: many places you can travel to and many places to go in your career. However, this was not manufactured in a marketing department, but rather by young talent who recently joined AA.

“I’m afraid I cannot take credit for the branding statement,” Mitchell said. “We approached our own recent MBA hires and asked them how to be more effective on campus. They talked to peers and other people they graduated with who do not work for AA. They led a presentation and the tag line was One Company, Many Destinations and I just loved it!” Mitchell continued.

Other take-aways from the presentation included taking directors and new recruits on campus. Something they did, but have now increased in numbers. Also, shouting about their travel privileges. These benefits have now been added to collateral material.



**William Mitchell**  
Managing Director - Leadership Planning & Performance, American Airlines, Fort Worth, TX, US

**American Airlines** is the world’s second largest commercial passenger airline. It provides scheduled jet service to destinations throughout North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, Pacific and Asia. It serves 157 airports in 40 countries and has more than 2,400 daily departures.  
**Headquarters:** Fort Worth, TX, US  
**Employees:** 78,700 total employees for AMR Corporation (includes AA, our regional affiliate, and a handful of AMR subsidiaries)



**Greg Muccio**  
Team Leader Employment, Southwest Airlines, Dallas, TX, US

**Southwest Airlines** is a major domestic airline that provides primarily shorthaul, high-frequency, point-to-point, low-fare service. Southwest was incorporated in Texas and commenced customer service on June 18, 1971 with three Boeing 737 aircraft serving three Texas cities - Dallas, Houston and San Antonio. Today, Southwest operates over 500 Boeing 737 aircraft in 67 cities.  
**Headquarters:** Dallas, TX, US  
**Employees:** 35,000



While out on campus, AA is mindful of operating a double focus: “We try to balance ‘love to work for us’ versus ‘could be a customer’, we are aware lots of top talent will go into management consulting or investment banking and could be flying with us one day,” Mitchell explained.

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### Boeing – community efforts to build the pipeline younger

Boeing, the world’s leading aerospace company, invests in a wide range of education initiatives including the right recruiting relationships to leverage their employer brand. Boeing’s corporate citizenship initiatives focus on five areas: education, environment, health and human services, arts & culture and civic.

The education initiative aims to promote the development of quality learning environments in the areas of maths, science and literacy necessary for future success in the workforce and in life.

“We support education programmes at all levels, from early learning through high school, to universities and beyond,” said Bud Fishback, senior manager college programs at Boeing. “Our employees mentor students of all ages and these relationships help build a pipeline of students who will pursue education that is important to the aerospace industry.”

At the university level, Boeing has found their efforts more effective when they partner with the faculty and department heads: “Instead of just seeing a large group of students, we engage in many ways, including small-group information sessions,” Fishback said “Those who show up to these sessions really have an interest in Boeing and a background that we are interested in.”

The culture at Boeing is that of “extremely talented people, collaboration and a place where you can find your niche”. Boeing is building on the ‘working together’ element of the culture and Fishback explained that they are seeing more and more of this.

Supportive of this aspect of their culture is internal mentoring. However, more recently this has evolved to include reverse mentoring where employees of 0-5 years’ service teach more mature employees about social networks and knowledge sharing tools.

“However, at the moment, one of our biggest challenges is conveying to students that we are actually hiring,” Fishback concluded.

Employer	Ranking	Country	Based on field of study
KLM	1	Netherlands	Business
EADS (Airbus)	1	France	Engineering/IT
Deutsche Lufthansa	2	Germany	Business
Finnair	2	Finland	Business
Singapore Airlines	2	Singapore	Business
Air France	3	France	Business
Boeing	3	US	Engineering
Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd	3	Hong Kong	Business and Engineering/IT
Austrian Airlines	7	Austria	Humanities
Airbus	8	UK	Engineering/IT
Swiss Airlines	8	Switzerland	Law
LOT Polish Airlines	10	Poland	Humanities/liberal arts/education
British Airways	11	UK	Humanities/liberal arts/education
Air China	12	China	Law
Scandinavian Airlines	20	Norway	Business
Dragon Airlines	21	Hong Kong	Engineering/IT
China Southern Airlines	33	China	Humanities
American Airlines	41	US	Humanities/liberal arts/education
Southwest Airlines	52	US	Humanities/liberal arts/education
Delta	54	US	Humanities/liberal arts/education

### Fast facts about Fly Your Ideas

Competition period  
Launched mid-October 2008 and the final took place in Paris on June 18th 2009.

#### The prizes:

- First place – 30,000 Euros, Second place – 15,000 Euros
- Five finalist teams were flown to Paris in June to do the final presentation, all expenses paid and tickets to the Le Bourget Airshow where the winning team and runner up were announced
- Second-round teams had an Airbus employee assigned to guide them this is not a prize but a benefit of the students’ participation

#### The winning team

The winning team was a group of three students at the University of Queensland. Their idea involved making bio composite cabin materials from castor plant natural fibres.

### Why aviation is so popular – in their words

“There is very high identification to the product and the brand. The main driver is people are interested in flying around the world – there is an emotional relationship with the brand and the industry.”

– Christoph Fay, Head of HR, Marketing and Talent Sourcing, Deutsche Lufthansa, Frankfurt, Germany

“The airline industry is something that is romantic and exciting.”

– Greg Muccio, Team Leader Employment, Southwest Airlines, Dallas, TX, US

“I believe aviation will continue to be popular, as long as the global perspective is present. Having said that – lots of people like to travel and there is always that slice of people who are incredibly passionate, not just about airline travel, a group who are really truly passionate changing it for the better.”

– William Mitchell, Managing Director - Leadership Planning & Performance, American Airlines, Fort Worth, TX, US

“No question in my mind that aviation employers will continue to be popular. At career fairs we have the longest lines and when we do presentations we fill up the rooms.”

– Bud Fishback, Senior Manager College Programs, Boeing, Seattle, WA, US