

FROM WORST TO FIRST

Behind the Scenes of
Continental's Remarkable Comeback

GORDON BETHUNE

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MAIN IDEA

Ultimately, business is about people.

Everything you do to create a successful company or to forge a successful career will depend on your ability to create, develop and maintain good, healthy, honest and straight-forward relationships.

There's no such thing as a successful company that has a product nobody wants and where employees don't want to come to work. Therefore, you need to create an environment at work in which employees create added value by serving the customers and each other. When people feel good about the value they're creating, they become highly motivated. It's that simple.

<u>1. Is This Any Way to Run an Airline?</u>	Page 2
The principles behind changing Continental from an airline which provided unprofitable, terrible service into the best airline in the sky are so simple and common sense that most people have been taught them all their lives. The problem is that people tend to forget to apply them.	
<u>2. Whose Problem Is It?</u>	Page 2
To succeed in business, the formula is very simple: to deliver a product people want with employees who like working for the company.	
<u>3. A Market Plan: Fly to Win or You Can Make a Pizza So Cheap Nobody Wants to Eat It</u>	Page 3
The market plan called for Continental to stop doing whatever is unprofitable. In addition to rejigging the schedule and winning back the trust of travel agents, business partners and customers, Continental stopped focusing on lowering costs by taking away from its service some of the things people want.	
<u>4. A Financial Plan: Fund the Future or If You Don't Fund the Future, There Ain't Gonna Be One</u>	Page 3
The financial plan required Continental to make some hard decisions to get control of its finances -- renegotiating loans, canceling aircraft leases and so on. To do that successfully, the company made its creditors partners instead of adversaries.	
<u>5. A Product Plan: Make Reliability a Reality or It's Time To Act Like a Real Airline</u>	Page 4
All the marketing in the world won't help if you have a lousy product. So, fix the product if necessary. Define how you will measure the quality of the product, make it easy for people to let you know whether or not you've delivered a quality product and reward your employees when they deliver.	
<u>6. A People Plan: Working Together or Which Part of This Watch Don't You Think We Need?</u>	Page 4
An airline is pretty much like a watch - everything has to work together. Once employees have a product they believe in, an environment in which success is encouraged and rewarded and the finances needed, they will be too busy winning in the marketplace to worry about any inter-department feuds.	
<u>7. Success Has No Autopilot</u>	Page 5
It's human nature to relax a little when things are going smoothly. Therefore, you have to keep raising the bar continually to keep people focused on trying to improve. Start a self-reinforcing cycle in which the company keeps moving forward with quality improvements. Your customers will love it too.	
<u>8. How the Sickest Patients Need the Best Doctors</u>	Page 5
If you were going to have brain surgery, would you look for the best surgeon you could find or the one who submitted the lowest bid for the job? It's the same in business.	
<u>9. Nobody Loses When the Whole Team Wins</u>	Page 6
A good company is like a good sports team. Everybody knows the objective is to win. Everybody has a different job. Everybody works together. Everybody respects each other's jobs.	
<u>10. Keeping the Lines of Communication Open</u>	Page 6
In good companies, employees know exactly what's going on in the marketplace because the company tells them openly, honestly and truthfully. Employees have confidence the management are giving them accurate information, and respond in kind by providing managers with accurate input. Good communication has to be two-way to be of real value.	
<u>11. Predictability</u>	Page 7
Predictability is an incredibly valuable trait for any company to offer potential customers or clients. Combined with high standards of quality, predictability is a huge competitive advantage. And predictability works just as well with employees as it does with customers or clients.	
<u>12. What Gets Measured Gets Managed</u>	Page 7
The key concept in improving performance is to: 1. Make sure everyone knows the goal. 2. Tell everyone how the goal is going to be measured. 3. Tell everyone what the rewards are.	
<u>Gordon Bethune - A Career Snapshot</u>	Page 8

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