



An Abundance of Caring: American Airlines Helps Redeploy Employees

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The global COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruption in many sectors, but few have been hit harder than the airline industry. According to many airlines and the Transportation Security Administration, travel has dropped over 95% in the last month. [1]

So how is the world's largest airline navigating this crisis? By realizing that how they respond to their employees in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the American Airlines (AA) core purpose "to care for people on life's journey" to both team members and the traveling public. Rather than reacting in an "abundance of caution," American Airlines is choosing to respond with an "abundance of caring" by trying to make it easier for their employees find new short- or long-term opportunities.

With the travel industry being decimated as billions of people around the world are staying home, it comes down to an imbalance in supply and demand. With so few people traveling, there is a large supply of AA employees who have seen their schedules (and thus their incomes) drop precipitously down to their "minimums." At the same time, many large retailers have a much higher demand to fill thousands of seasonal, temporary, part- and full-time opportunities in order to serve all the people who are staying home.

Inspired by Qantas and Hilton, two other global corporations hit hard by COVID-19, American Airlines decided to proactively help redeploy their employees looking for ways to supplement their incomes. On April 1, 2020, American Airlines partnered with Deloitte to launch a unique partnership program with a number of national retailers (e.g., Albertsons Companies, Amazon, CVS Health, Home Depot, Instacart) that committed to moving American applicants through an expedited hiring process. Believing that existing AA employees have valuable transferable skills, all of the partners agreed to one of two hiring models:

1. Accelerated hiring process, where it takes 24 hours to 1 week to process new employees
2. Preferred model, with no interview or background check required

Employees who are interested access the Team Member Opportunity Center on American Airlines' intranet. They then review open positions at the six partner organizations and apply to roles for which they have the required skills. When employees accept an opportunity with a partner, it does not impact their employment with American. If they take a part-time role and continue working their normal AA hours or take a reduced work schedule, they are responsible to coordinate their schedules appropriately. If they want to take a full-time position, they can take a voluntary leave of absence with American but automatically retain their active AA employment status for the length of their approved leaves.

Within the first week, the Team Member Opportunity Center had 18,000 visits to partner sites and over 700 team members placed in new roles. Given the success of the program, American Airlines will continue to expand this program with other partners.

American Airlines leadership realizes that they're taking a risk of losing valuable, talented employees that they may need to replace when the economy rebounds. However, they are committed to exploring every possible opportunity to care for their team members because it's good business, both now and in the future.

[1] <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/09/politics/airline-passengers-decline/index.html>

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