



## Rumor Control -- *Redux*

In *Touch & Gos 11-05 – Rumor Control*, we tried to put to bed the persistent but completely false rumor that connection carrier MECs somehow have any control or approval authority over scope-related aspects of our contract. Despite that effort, we still occasionally hear concern voiced, often accompanied by the preface, “I just read on the Forum that ALPA has a conflict of interest and that . . .”

If you have ever taken a marketing or media class, you are likely aware that an age-old question asks how many times a message must be repeated before it finally sinks in. There is no clear answer. In 1885, British businessman Thomas Smith attempted to answer that question in a book titled *Successful Advertising*, best remembered for its 20-step plan for getting people to buy a product. A portion of the advice reads:

- The **first** time people look at any given ad, they don't even see it.
- The **fifth** time, they actually read the ad.
- The **eighth** time, they start to think, "Here's that confounded ad again."
- The **fourteenth** time, they start to remember wanting a product exactly like this for a long time.
- The **fifteenth** time, they start to yearn for it because they can't afford to buy it.
- The **eighteenth** time, they curse their poverty for not allowing them to buy this terrific product.
- The **twentieth** time prospects see the ad, they buy what is offering.

Apparently, there are those out there who continue to borrow from Smith's playbook hoping that others will eventually “buy” their product, and that product is a plate full of false rumor accompanied by a large side order of fear mongering. The premise, presumably, is that if the rumor is repeated often enough, pilots will

eventually believe that it must be true. (It was on the internet after all.)

### Did you hear about . . .

A friend of a friend of ours is an international airline captain named Joe. Captain Joe was on a layover in Europe and went to a local bar for a drink. An attractive woman approached and asked if she could buy him another. He was flattered and thought, “What could possibly go wrong?” She returned with two drinks, and Capt Joe took a sip. That was the last thing he remembered until he woke up lying in an ice-filled hotel bathtub, dazed, confused and sore. He called out for help, and when the help finally arrived, he learned that he was the latest victim of an infamous ring of organ thieves operating in the city.

But there is good news for Captain Joe; none of the story is true. Instead, it is one of the most successful urban legends of the last 15 years. Most of us have heard the story in one form or another, and the chances are that you can accurately retell it to someone else (at least retaining the most salient details)—even though the accuracy of the retelling has nothing to do with the truth itself. And so it goes with the urban legend of our scope provisions.

So how is it that Captain Joe's story has become so ingrained in urban lore? And more to the point of this *Touch & Gos*, why does the urban legend about connection carrier influence over our scope language still persist?

***“A lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can even get its boots on.”***

**--Mark Twain**

Perhaps it's because, as Mark Twain once observed, "A lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can even get its boots on."

Whatever the reason, as long as it persists, we feel the need to address it at least one more time. We'll avoid Mr. Smith's 20-point advice as we are pretty confident that the vast majority of Delta pilots don't want or need to read 18 more versions of this *Touch & Gos* to understand that the rumor is completely false. So with apologies to those who already read and understood *Touch & Gos 11-05*, we once again provide you with the truth behind the legend. But we caution our readers that, as is often the case, truth is much more boring than fiction.

ALPA previously settled a lawsuit commonly referred to as the "Ford/Cooksey lawsuit." As part of this settlement, changes were made to the ALPA Administrative Manual as approved by the court, designed to strengthen ALPA's ability to negotiate scope. The *ALPA Administrative Manual* reads in part:

*" . . . prior to commencement of any bargaining for any ALPA pilot group within a mainline/express system, the applicable Negotiating Committee will meet with the Negotiating Committees of other ALPA pilot groups in the mainline/express system to review opening scope proposals and how they advance ALPA's scope goals and guidelines."*

Now reading the *ALPA Administrative Manual* is only slightly more invigorating than studying for recurrent, so let's discuss in practical terms exactly what the Ford/Cooksey settlement means to the Delta pilots.

It means that while a review of opening scope proposals will occur, no (i.e., zero, nada, zilch, zippo) consensus is required to proceed with negotiations.

**Bottom line: The Delta MEC Negotiating Committee does not require the approval of, nor will they seek the approval of, any other MEC to proceed with negotiations affecting the scope provisions of our Pilot Working Agreement. The continued allegations to the contrary are simply false.**

So the next time someone tries to get you to believe that any pilots other than Delta pilots have control over the scope provisions of our Pilot Working Agreement, make them a beer bet. Once they agree, simply hand them your copy of the PWA, and ask them to point out the language that was included or even influenced by the "meet and confer" language of the Ford/Cooksey settlement. They will be unable to do so (because that language does not exist), and soon, you will no longer be thirsty.

Once that conversation is over, you can get back to more interesting conversations. Did you hear about the pilot who was abducted by aliens from a bar in Manila? Well, as the story goes . . .

