

AA PILOTS FOR ALPA

Strategic Planning at ALPA vs. APA

The One-Minute Summary: Where Resources and Structure Coalesce

- ALPA has resources that train, equip, and support its member airlines with a Strategic Plan that reflects the pilot group's desires and environment while being mindful of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- ALPA carriers routinely collaborate cross-airline in the development and maintenance of its Strategic Plans due to ALPA's structure.
- In order to access ALPA's \$100 million Major Contingency Fund (MCF), Strategic Plans must be approved and monitored. This process provides a forcing function for member airlines to set timelines, tasking, and accountability within their local structure.
- APA has a Strategic Planning Committee that can be caught in the middle of the structural tension between the APA President and BOD. Additionally, there are no structural functions at APA to provide accountability for, or execution of, its Strategic Plan.

Want to know more? [More detail below!](#)

ALPA's Strategic Planning Process

An organized and cohesive union follows a plan that achieves the desires of its members. A plan requires foresight, collaboration, trial and error, psychological profiling, constant tweaking, and discipline. ALPA's institutional knowledge, accompanied with its pilot-driven and staff-supported framework, naturally builds pilot unity and allows for course corrections when circumstances change.

ALPA has a \$100 million war chest called the [Major Contingency Fund \(MCF\)](#) that helps fund contract negotiations or other efforts vital to pilot representation. Access to the MCF requires a Strategic Plan that is approved by ALPA's [Executive Council](#) and is subject to oversight to ensure critical benchmarks are met. This oversight is a structural forcing function that incentivizes a Master Executive Council (MEC, aka [an ALPA carrier's BOD](#)) to have an executable Strategic Plan that reflects the goals of its pilots during critical moments.

Each MEC tasks its Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) with developing a strategic plan in and outside negotiations. ALPA provides a training course for MEC Strategic Planning, as well as follow-on Strategic Communications Planning and Strategy Sessions on an as-needed basis, for any ALPA carrier with support from multiple staff departments at ALPA National.

Strategic Plans vary from MEC to MEC, but they typically consist of common items:

- Analysis of the pilot group's past and current environment
- A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis
- Goals for the pilot group based on pilot desires, the environment, and SWOT analysis
- Objectives, initiatives, and resources of the pilot group
- Implementation schedules and specific committee tasking for the Strategic Plan
- Accountability mechanisms to keep the Strategic Plan on track

While information flows are never perfect, ALPA's structure forces the [MEC Chairmen](#) as well as each airline local representative to interact via [Executive Board and Board of Directors meetings](#). There are also [Executive Vice Presidents](#) at ALPA that can bridge between carriers within ALPA's structure. These EVP's foster collaboration from [ALPA's National Officers](#) down to the [local domicile leadership](#). In addition to elected leaders, the professional staff at ALPA National are at the disposal of any ALPA pilot group who asks.

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With a Strategic Plan in hand, ALPA carriers then leverage their most powerful tool: their pilots.

Local Executive Councils, Communications, Negotiating, Strategic Preparedness and Strike, Pilot-2-Pilot, Contract Enforcement, Hotels, and every other committee move in unison toward the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan with the MEC Chair as the conductor of the orchestra. Mandatory base meetings are conducted every four months at each domicile at a minimum, with a viable threat of representative recall by their membership. Family awareness events are not just fun: they are purposeful. Pilot unity building events are not just for free beer: they educate and motivate pilots to stay the course.

What About APA's Strategic Planning Process?

APA crafts Strategic Plans using the [APA Strategic Planning Committee](#). There are key differences.

- APA's Strategic Planning Committee is appointed by and reports to the APA President, who is directly elected by the membership rather than the APA BOD. However, the APA President is not directly involved with contract negotiations. Therefore, the Strategic Plan from this committee is not always aligned with the negotiating tasking orders promoted by the APA Board of Directors.
- Although there is limited interaction between APA's President and some MEC Chairmen as well as some committee-to-committee interactions between APA and ALPA, there are no structural functions that force AA's pilot group to collaborate with any other airline pilot union.
- Most of APA's staff and Subject Matter Experts, while incredibly talented, have only worked for APA or are pilot volunteers. This limits the industry knowledge available and historical perspective among this group to AA's pilot group or to limited time volunteering at a previous airline.
- APA does not have a structural way to provide accountability for any Strategic Plan like ALPA does with its MCF.

Meanwhile, Also at American Airlines...

Several ALPA MECs already interface directly with AA's management team and each other. Envoy, Piedmont, PSA, Air Wisconsin, and Mesa are all ALPA-represented carriers – who have had numerous dealings with AA's CFO and their respective wholly owned carrier. Management's strategies and tactics used on the regionals are like those used at mainline AA: thriftiness, bargaining misdirection, verbal promises that never pan out, "we cannot afford it," and countless more delay tactics have been used ad nauseum. APA's interactions with these carriers' unions, historically, are few.

Successful wolves hunt in packs for a reason. Lone wolves starve.