



Former GC is Delta Air Lines' New CEO

By Brooke Heath

September 1 marked the beginning of a new era for Richard H. Anderson and Delta Air Lines, Inc. Succeeding retiring CEO Gerald Grinstein, Anderson took the reins as chief executive officer of the company.

Who would guess that 20 years ago, long before this \$600,000-salary offer, Anderson was working as an in-house attorney for another airline? According to the *Fulton County Daily Report*, in 1987, Anderson was practicing criminal law as a prosecutor for the Harris County Criminal Court in Texas. But it just so happened that at the time, Anderson's neighbor, Ben Hirst, was the general counsel for Continental Airlines, based out of Houston, Texas. Hirst was impressed by Anderson and offered him an option for a career change—as in-house counsel for Continental.

Hirst told the *Fulton County Daily Report* that he was “impressed with what an extraordinarily capable person [Anderson] was. I talked him into leaving that job and going to the Continental legal department.”

Soon after starting work as in-house counsel for Continental, Anderson was promoted to be Hirst's deputy general counsel.

“He has a unique ability to grow and expand and fill whatever role is available for him. He quickly mastered the business of being an in-house lawyer,” said Hirst.

A native of Galveston, Texas, Anderson graduated from the University of Houston and from South Texas College. After his promotion to deputy general counsel, Anderson received several other promotions that led him to Northwest Airlines, Inc. There, he became president, and in February 2001, he became the chief executive officer of the company.

According to the *Fulton County Daily Report*, Anderson and the company's previous CEO helped to keep Northwest Airlines, Inc., out of bankruptcy when many competitors were going under. Anderson cut \$1.6 billion from Northwest Airlines' annual operating expenses, built up \$3 billion in cash reserves, and expanded capacity.

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In 2004, Anderson left the airline to become executive vice president of UnitedHealth Group, a Minneapolis-based healthcare company. Anderson was also named the president of its commercial services group, according to the *Fulton County Daily Report*.

Many think that with his experience in the airline industry, Anderson will be just what Delta Air Lines needs after recently exiting Chapter 11.

A recent report published by Morgan Stanley Research North America states, "Anderson also understands the competition: having worked at Northwest and Continental, Anderson has a good grasp of the competitive dynamic. Both Continental and Northwest are good, strong competitors, and we believe many of Delta's positive strategic changes of the past few years will benefit from Anderson's experiences and input."

According to *The Washington Post*, Anderson has no intentions of merging Delta with other airlines.

Anderson and his wife, Susan, are preparing to relocate to Atlanta, where Delta Air Lines is based.

On the Net

New Delta Chief Exec Earned His Wings as an In-House Counsel www.law.com/jsp/ihc/PubArticleIHC.jsp?id=1188464543080

Delta Names Richard Anderson as CEO
www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/21/AR2007082101217.html

Delta Air Lines
www.delta.com/home/index.jsp