

As Charlotte grows, so grows Piedmont

What Piedmont has done at Charlotte defies the odds and the rules. It has been successful, but it hasn't been easy.

How successful?

"The rest of the industry looks at Piedmont's efforts at Charlotte as one of the greatest success stories since deregulation. Every Piedmont employee should feel the same way," Leonard Martin, vice president-passenger services, said.

How difficult?

"It's been a tremendous challenge," Martin said. "Forecasts have just about been meaningless. How does anyone reasonably predict a station will go from 72,000 enplanements in June of 1981 to 160,000 in June a year later?"

But that's exactly what Piedmont did at Charlotte. There are trunk airlines that do not have that number of enplanements at any station on their system.

Charlotte didn't just happen. It was built by Piedmont people, and it was built faster than most experienced airline people would have dreamed to be possible.

new terminal

The biggest obstacle to overcome was also probably the most desirable one. That was our move to the new Charlotte terminal.

"It certainly meant better facilities for our passengers. It was less confusing, more comfortable — just about everything we wanted to give them," Martin said. "But it was also a major challenge for our people."

They have not gone without the Company's support. Here are some of the investments Piedmont has made at Charlotte to respond to that challenge:

- 82 additional agents
- 8 additional supervisors
- 15 portable communications sets
- 3 additional fuel trucks
- 6 additional tractors for pushouts

And, of course, more has been added. All of it has come in the three months since Piedmont moved into the new terminal.

These resources have been in response to phenomenal growth at Charlotte. Here's how it breaks down in year over year comparisons for the month of June:

- Passengers enplaned, 1982 — 157,935 vs. 72,035 in 1981.
- Passengers deplaned, 1982 — 161,035 vs. 73,785 in 1981.
- Air Mail, 622,754 pounds, vs. 260,702 pounds in 1981.
- Air Freight — 670,206 pounds, vs. 345,428 pounds in 1981.

"Obviously Charlotte is working. Those figures demonstrate it," Martin said.

Those figures represent 120 percent more passengers in a single year; 139 percent more air mail, and 94 percent more air freight.

It was not done without a great deal of problem solving. Here are some that had to be met.

Communications problems. Aircraft, employees, and passengers

were spread over a greater space, let alone in greater numbers. The solution: "walkie-talkies" on the ramps to better coordinate the movements of all the elements around our growing complexes.

more trucks

Fueling. With a hydrant fueling system coming on line this Fall, we wanted to avoid capital investments in more fuel trucks. But the growth couldn't wait, so Piedmont added three more fuel trucks to its Charlotte fleet.

Cargo handling. As volumes increased, it became apparent that there wasn't enough time to transfer both baggage and cargo in 35-minute ground times. The passengers' needs were put first, and cargo has been held until the next complex, leaving more time for sortation, and reducing delays.

"We still need more room near the aircraft for baggage sortation. We're negotiating that with the airport management now," Martin said.

alone accounted for 200 individual passenger handlings on an average day at Charlotte in June.

"We think we're getting close to the right mix at Charlotte to deal with these challenges like a typical Piedmont operation does," Martin said. He points out that Charlotte has one of the system's lowest ratios of complaints for 10,000 passengers boarded.

"It's a good operation. It's attracting people to Piedmont, customers we all need to pay our salaries," Martin said. "But it isn't perfect. We want to know what's wrong there as well as what's right. But I'm confident we're finding solutions to old problems a lot faster than we're finding new problems. That's progress."



Agent Darla Wiggins is one of the over 400 employees now working in CLT. Since the new terminal opened in May, 82 additional agents have been hired.



Randy Hadfield calls the captain to tell him the flight is ready for departure and that the engines can be started.



Cathy Lineberger prepares to load cargo onto a flight. In July, Piedmont boarded over 170,000 passengers in CLT and handled approximately 340,000 pieces of luggage.



More than 4,000 unaccompanied minors pass through CLT each month. Agent Bill Widenhouse talks with two girls who are awaiting their flights.

"So far as people go our only problem has been numbers, finding the right numbers," Martin said. "Our people have worked harder and smarter. They've tackled every problem with a good attitude and a good effort."

special request

Again, some things had to be learned by experience. In June, for example, there were 1,741 requests for wheelchairs. Each of these requests required individual attention, and this was happening 50 times a day. Like everything else at Charlotte, these figures are growing.

Piedmont also had 4,020 unaccompanied minors pass through Charlotte in June. Each had to be individually met and watched over until the youngster's next flight departed, or the youngster was met.

Those two categories of requests



Dan Traveria (foreground) and Randy Curde send information on flights to the next stations. In the background are flight monitors, the only ones on Piedmont's

system, which give employees in operations visual contact with each of Piedmont's 12 gates.