

'On-time' improvements grow from team efforts

Phones have been ringing in every Piedmont station over the past few weeks by callers who spend more time listening than talking. The calls are from Piedmont's On-Time Performance Committee, and their purpose is to gather suggestions on improving performance even more in 1988.

Jim Tabor, manager-system performance, said the calls are part of a new strategy to tailor on-time recommendations even closer to the needs of each station. In addition, pilots and flight attendants continue to offer suggestions through their departments, giving the company valuable insight into flight delays.

"Last year, the company primarily addressed broad policy issues that affect on-time performance," Tabor said. "These recommendations, such as increasing block times and adding key personnel, have mostly been accomplished with excellent results. Now the company must have a more detailed analysis of each station's needs in order to address them most effectively."

Almost every committee member is responsible for working with a number of stations. The member acts as a liaison between those stations and the committee, building a cooperative relationship to find which actions can cure which delays. According to Sky Day, director of training-stations, the initial phone conversations start with last year's written survey of station recommendations.

"We ask how effectively the previously adopted recommendations improved performance, then open the door to any new ideas," Day said. "We're finding that a lot of hidden factors cause delays—and that these factors often change as recommendations are adopted."

For example, Day said that some stations have problems with passengers arriving late at the gate. But many of these passengers actually arrive at the airport on-time, yet are held up at the ticket counter due to long lines. So the "late-arriving" passengers are really late through no fault of their own.

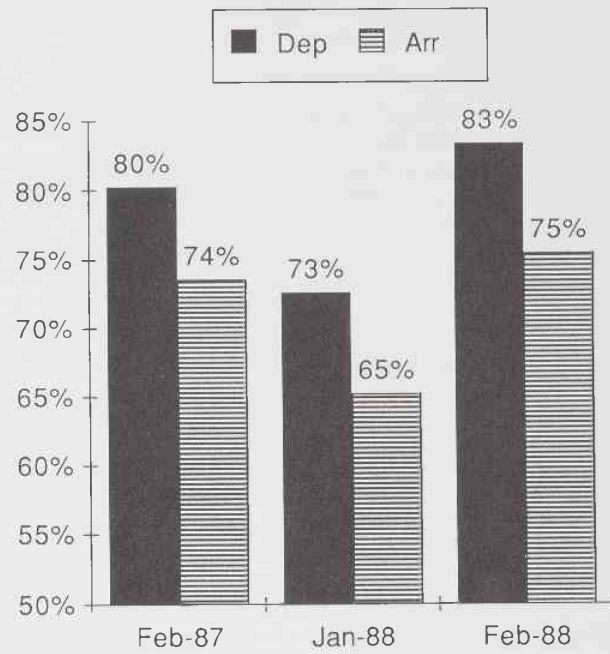
After getting feedback from a station, the committee member lists the suggested recommendations and sends them to the station for more analysis. Stations then return the revised recommendations to

Piedmont's on-time performance was "back on track" for February with departures and arrivals on goal or above.

The weather was cooperative, but significant improvements were also seen in hub operations and in gate departures as a result of improved methods of transmitting weight and balance data to aircraft.

1988 on-time standards have been "tightened" to within 14 minutes of schedule, so the differences shown here are even better than they appear.

system performance



the committee member who combines the information with that gleaned from other stations. The result is an exhaustive list of new improvements to on-time performance—a list that should be compiled by early spring.

But Day said that some improvements have already been implemented thanks to information from station managers and flight crews. One example is the new procedures for giving weight and balance close-outs to pilots. Piedmont sometimes took delays while waiting for the close-outs, but now allows pushback before sending the figures electronically to the cockpits. The result is that our pilots get the information they need without sacrificing performance.

Al Huddleston, manager of crew scheduling-flight attendants, said that stations are giving frank answers to their problems and that the one-to-one relationship between committee members and stations has improved the analysis of delay causes.

"The new system helps because it gives a more direct approach for the stations," Huddleston said. "In addition, most of their problems are inter-related and one station often has the same problems as another. So we're able to see patterns while working on individual solutions."

The renewed push for on-time performance in 1988 comes after the system performance department set a new performance goal for the year: 85 percent departures on-time and 80 percent arrivals on-time. Tabor said the figures appear to be the same as last year's goal but are actually a two percent increase.

"This year Piedmont is using the Department of Transportation's 14-minute window for on-time flights rather than the customary 15 minutes," he said. "The change in formula causes about a two percent increase in the system-wide performance goal compared to last year."

In other words, any flight that leaves or arrives 15 minutes after its published schedule will now be classified as one minute late. Last year, the company used the traditional 15-minute buffer in which a flight was still considered on-time.

Tabor said Piedmont is adopting the new standard to be consistent with the DOT's requirements. The DOT started its 14-minute window in September 1987 when it began publishing the performance data of all carriers.

The new goal is still a challenge for Piedmont—a challenge heightened by the increased attention to on-time performance demonstrated by other airlines. With good weather, the additional insights of our station managers and flight crews, and the strong commitment to customer service that characterizes our company, it should be a goal we attain.

Part-timers to receive service pins

More than 2,300 employees will receive credit for their part-time service with the company under a new policy.

Current part-time employees will now be eligible to receive service pins for their years of part-time service. Current full-time employees who have also worked for the company on a part-time basis will be credited for their part-time service and will receive service pins where indicated.

"In order to acknowledge the years of service our part-time employees have given to the company as well as credit full-time employees who began working with the company part-time, service seniority dates will be adjusted to include part-time

service," Dave Workman, vice president-human resources, said.

Employees will receive credit for part-time service amounting to one half their total time with the company as part-time employees. For example, if an employee worked part-time for two years and has been full-time for four years, he/she will receive a five-year pin. A person who has been part-time for 10 years will be eligible for a five-year pin.

"Eligible part-time employees will receive their pins in April," Workman said. "Because so many of our full-time employees began their Piedmont careers on a part-time basis, it will take longer for us to verify service dates and order additional pins."

On-time performance committee and station assignments

Doug Boggs, regional director—ORD, PBI, ELM, EVV, EWR, EYW, FAY, FLL, SAV

Carl Crumley, director-passenger procedures—MSP, MSY, PHL, PIT, PNS, PVD, RDU, RIC, ROA, ROC

Sky Day, director of training-stations—FNT, FWA, GNV, GRR, GSO, GSP, HTS, IAH, ILM

Fred Haecker, manager-strategic planning—SBN, MYR, DCA, DEN, DFW, DTW

Judy Hemmingway, analyst-stations—AGS, APF, BDL, BGM, BNA, BOS, BUF, JAX

Dave Howard, manager-frequent traveler marketing—LGW, NAS, ORF, RSW, ALB, BTV, ISP

Al Huddleston, manager of crew scheduling-flight attendants—CAE, CAK, CHA, CHO, CHS, CLE, CMI, CRW, CVG, SFO

Clay Jones, director-operations budgets & resources—LYH, MCO, MEM, MIA, ATL, AVL, AZO, SDF, DAB

Bill McIntyre, manager-applications development

Brenda Newsome, manager-aircraft routing—TLH, TOL, TPA, TRI, TYS, UCA, ORH, OAJ, STL

Peter Otradovec, director-schedule planning

Jane Rhoades, senior air transportation analyst—JFK, LAN, LAX, LEX, LGA, ISO, ITH

George Stearns, director-corporate finance

Jim Tabor, manager-system performance—CLT, SYR, DAY, BWI

Debbie Thompson, director-customer relations

Steve Zaks, manager-tariffs and revenue accounting (Henson)—all Henson-staffed stations