Virtual Airline CEO Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in our VA CEO interview for the Virtual Airline List. Depending on the editor this word document it will be published on the social network and our website:

Please take your time answering the questions.

1.   Can you tell us a bit about yourself? For example; how old you are, what your background with flying in general is and what brought you to creating your own Virtual Airline.

Hello! I'm Ryan, the co-president of Northern Virtual Airlines, I'm a highschool student from Wisconsin and am an active student pilot in a Cessna 152. I am also the co-founder of my school's aviation club. I do have dreams of becoming an airline pilot in the future. VA wise, I toyed around with the idea of running a Virtual Airline for a few months before starting Northern. My other Co-President, Richmond and I had thought of doing a Midwest Virtual Airline before finally settling in on what Northern is today.

2.   When did you start your Virtual Airline?

We began work in October of 2016. The airline had liveries and a site finished by december and had a reasonable number of real world pilots on staff. We officially launched Northern on December 31st 2016.

3.   Do you consider your Virtual Airline successful?

There isn't a great way of evaluating Northern's success because it really depends on how you measure it. By pilot numbers we are pretty low but I don't think that should mean Northern is not sucessful. The goal I always had for Northern was to create something different and to create something fun and interesting for pilots and I think we have achieved that. For every new PIREP filed and every message I receive talking about the airline and the enjoyment it's brought one of our pilots really makes me proud to run this Airline and I think that sense of pride and enjoyment the airline gives myself and others makes it a success.

4.   What is your most interesting experience with your Virtual Airline, what has happened that makes you think so?

I think the most interesting thing that I have personally experienced has been looking on the VATSIM scopes and seeing an aircraft connected as "NTNxxx" flying around the midwest. It's just kinda surreal to know that there is someone flying around in a livery you designed and for an airline you helped build.

5.   Did you have any bad experiences with your Virtual Airline?

We have had a number of people sign up to Northern but then never fly. This has always been a bit discouraging but I also beleive it is something every VA faces and it's just a fact of operating a VA and in the end allows you to narrow down the pilots to the ones really interested in your airline.

6.   What do you think of your Virtual Airline's flow of new and leaving VA pilots?

Is there something you do to attract more pilots? And why do you think some pilots leave your Virtual Airline?

Going off what I said in the question above, It's been a bit of an uphill battle getting pilots in and getting them flying. We try our best to advetise what we do differently to potential pilots and that has worked pretty well. I think the main reason we have lost pilots is that we have a pretty limited fleet. We do not fly 737NGs or Airbus A3XX's and with that we don't have a huge route network. We fly to small fields in the Midwest of the United States with a few 'vacation' destinations around the country. Our goal when launching Northern was to simulate a start up airline. We set up with about 7million "dollars" to buy planes and airport slots from then on we have tracked our income/ expenses and have been using that as a way to gauge what aircraft and routes we can open. This has kept us limited to a small regional airline providing Essential Air Service flights to small fields in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Iowa. This limited structure has been quite enjoyable for local pilots such as myself but may be a limiting factor from those from other parts of the world. However, as we grow in people, we grow our fleet and destinations and hopefully that will bring in more people.

7.   What types of planes does your Virtual Airline use and do you have all the custom liveries available for your VA?

We operate the Cessna 404 Titan, the Cessna 208 Grand Caravan, the Embraer 120ER, the Pilatus PC-12 and the Boeing 737-200. We do have custom liveries for every plane in our fleet (each tail number has a livery)

8.   Does your VA fly on a network? If so, what do you think about it?

Do you feel it supplements the general flying experience, what do you think of the network in general and is it required for your pilots to fly on this network?

I know a majority of our pilots fly on VATSIM. It is in no way a necessity to be a member of Northern. I think VATSIM is a great tool for all flight simmers. As a student pilot I have learned a majority of my radio communication skills from my time as a pilot and controller on VATSIM. These are some skills that are necessary to real world flying and being able to practice them any day for free is a great resource.

9.   Do you use any flight tracking software?

 If so, which one, and are you happy about the service it provides? Would you like to improve it for example?
We use SmartCars by TFDi Designs. I really enjoy the program and I think it is a great choice for any VA because it is very familiar to most virtual pilots and for those who haven't used it before, it is very easy to use.

10.   Do you make use of the offers some developers / distributors have for Virtual Airlines? Do you think these developers / distributors have good offers? And does it fit your Virtual Airline policy?

Not currently. I would love to get offers to extend to our pilots but the size of our VA is limiting these opportunities for now.

11.   Does your Virtual Airline have a custom made internet web page or do you use, for example, PHPVMS and equivalents? Are you happy about your VA's web page?

We have a custom web page that I coded with our HR director, Kody. It has it's faults as any website does but we are always working on fixing the bugs. As I'm sure many folks are aware, PHPvms can be difficult at times (as much as I love it) but once you work them out, it's a great system that I am happy to have implementmed to our site.

12.   And lastly, what are your expectations for your Virtual Airline in the coming twelve months?

I really just want to keep welcoming new pilots to Northern. I love running this airline and I'm not planning on giving up. This airline has become such a great community (albeit a small one) and I want to keep that community going and to make new connections with new people and share great flights with them all.

Kind regards,
The Virtual Airline List team