

People-in-Travel

Tracking Travel's Leaders



From Travel Business Analyst

New IATA head

Tony Tyler, currently head of Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific Airways (CPA), has been named to head the Geneva-based IATA (International Air Transport Association). He will be proposed at IATA's AGM this June and if approved, as is likely, he will start work in July as director-general and CEO.

The influence of IATA's current DG&CEO, Giovanni Bisignani - over IATA's moves to lessen aviation's impact on the environment, over its continuing technical work, and as an often-forceful supporting spokesman for the world airlines - has made the job more important than it was.



To us, Tyler will not match Bisignani's achievements, and may not be able to maintain those started. This is because at CPA he must adjust constantly to avoid upsetting the sensitivities of Hong Kong's political master, China. Also because Air China is a shareholder in CPA, and AC still has close links with the China government, despite no longer being a government-owned airline. And also because CPA is still a majority privately-owned company, with - even worse, in China's eyes - an ultimately UK-based owner.

As a result, it is difficult to know what Tyler thinks. Except, as many past and present leaders at CPA, he seems to believe in the enduring superiority of its anglo-philic management team. This is not necessarily pompous, but it is close.

That said, we did not think

much of Bisignani when he started at IATA in 2002 (his background was uninspiring head of Alitalia, although it is difficult to be much else at this airline), followed by a short spell as the first head of Opodo, the online travel agency that was then owned by nine airlines in Europe). Now we have almost awesome admiration for his work at IATA.

Hopefully, Tyler will live up to this role - which means he has a tough task ahead. Perhaps harder than at CPA in terms of administration. And results at IATA are not as easy to measure as at CPA. If profits are being made at an airline, then progress is probably in the right direction; if they are not, what needs to be changed?

Tyler, 55, has been head of CPA since 2007, but he joined the Swire Group, parent company of CPA, in 1977, when he was just 22. He would be only the 6th head of IATA since it was founded in 1945.

New Leaders

- Denis Hennequin, new CEO at Accor Hotels from last month, and due to add the chairman title this month. Ex head of McDonald's in Europe. Takes over from Gilles Pellisson, nephew of one of Accor's founders, who joined in 2005 and, like his predecessor, Jean-Marc Espalioux, was eased out.

- Simon Cooper has moved what we believe is sideways. He was head of Marriott's Ritz-Carlton brand, and is now head (with a duplicitous title of president and managing director) for Marriott Asia Pacific.

Herve Humler takes over RC, as president & COO. Humler was

one of the founders of RC, in 1983. The RC job also includes watching over the Bulgari brand, owned by Marriott and Bulgari.

- Rickard Gustafson, president & CEO, Scandinavian Airlines. Due to start this February, he would replace Mats Jansson, who left in October before his contract ended. Deputy CEO John Dueholm is currently doing the job.

- Thierry Antinori, 49, marketing head at Lufthansa, due to become chairman of its subsidiary Austrian Airlines this April.

- Sanjay Aggarwal, CEO, Kingfisher Airlines. He was SpiceJet CEO, a different type of airline. Will he be able to change?

- Zbigniew Mazur, president, LOT Polish Airlines. Anyone running a regular airline in a small market faces a tough task.

- Arnaldo Nardone has been elected as the ICCA president, beating Jurriaen Sleijster. This is a 2-year honorary post.

Sound bites

- Rudi Greiner, ex head of then-FS-owned Regent, first GM of then-Hong Kong Regent.

"I stayed at the triangular hotel in Pyongyang. The lift is slow. And internal lighting is poor; in the corridors, there was one person walking ahead with a torch! I was in country for two weeks, travelling around 2000km."

- Chew Choon Seng, who left as CEO of Singapore Airlines last month.

"It would be difficult for Silk Air [to become a lower-cost substitute for SA expansion; what we call the J-Plan, after Jetstar International for Qantas]. Because you get into other things if you go longhaul. I agree that Emirates followed the SA business plan. I agree it is a risk for low-fare-airlines to add frills [such as seat selection, frequent flyer program], and that is why I left Tiger on its own."

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