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My love letter to the airline industry during this time of trouble.

Dear Airline Industry,

I've been in this business for 36 years and I've never seen such uncertainty and felt so much anxiety. If you are feeling the same, it's okay because it's a natural reaction.

We all work in a business that is a very meaningful part of modern life. People love to travel and business people need to travel. Travel will return again, and hopefully more quickly than many would guess. Our global community will begin its wonderful journey again. You will be there at the ticket counter, at the gate, on the plane, on the ramp, in the hangar, and at corporate headquarters to do your part.

The next few months will be very difficult, especially for those in part time and lower wage positions. I struggle to provide advice here beyond wishing you get through this by helping others and getting help from others. Be careful of your mental health because it's something that is easy to lose. I have realized how others can be there to help when I fear I am failing.

Airline executives are tempted now to push and pull the levers of commerce. What must accompany this is leadership. There is real hunger for this because it is so lacking in its traditional sources. Leaders are men and women who spend time with front line staff to show encouragement and display empathy. They advise their board of directors that 2020 is not a year for paying executive bonuses. The best among them will decline to be paid salaries during the time of this pandemic.

These next few months will define the character of a company's board of directors. It's a time to reach deep into corporate resources to preserve the essence of any company – the employees who deliver service to the customer. If you have C-level staff who balk at shifting some of their wealth to benefit everyday employees, maybe it's time for those people to leave. The extreme wealth of a few individuals in modern society is its own type of virus which represents a greater business threat than any external competitor. Please take this occasion to bring equity to total pay.

The largest responsibility for recovery is always upon the millions of employees who do the work of keeping airlines flying. For those at headquarters, my consulting firm will continue publishing reports to help you improve revenue and customer service for your airline – when the time is right. During the next few months you will see reports designed to help you plan for recovery of our industry. Of course, during this time we are also collecting data to prepare for the annual cycle of ancillary revenue statistics, and these will feel the impact of the pandemic. Use this time to reach out to suppliers for advice on how to build much needed revenue.

For airline employees who serve in front line positions, please understand how much your service is appreciated by travelers. They will respond with loyalty to your airline when you demonstrate kindness, care, and hospitality. Remember that travel is an essential element of being human.

We are travel people!