

First Class Recognition

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF GREAT WORK

Last year, Jerry Atkin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of SkyWest Inc., celebrated his journey of forty years at the airline. As the longest-tenured CEO in the airline industry, Atkin has reason to be proud. From the early days of this St. George, Utah-based company of three planes and twenty employees—to what is now SkyWest Inc. (which includes SkyWest Airlines and ExpressJet Airlines)—Atkin leads 20,000 employees and a revolving fleet of about 693 planes.

But for all his achievements, Atkin says it's not about what he does but how the team pulls together. "It's a special thing for me to enjoy the recognition but more importantly to highlight what we've accomplished together as one team," he points out. "This reinforces the culture that we're all in this together."

This became a key element his team tried to bring out in planning the fortieth event. "We knew it was important for Jerry to not make the celebration about him but about what we have accomplished as a company," explains Lori Hunt, Vice President of People.

To commemorate the big day, the achievements and the challenges from the past forty years were highlighted throughout the building. Postcards were made to capture iconic moments, as well as sayings Atkin was known for and that have become part of company lore.

At the celebration itself, Atkin received a career achievement award and a beautiful handcrafted belt buckle.

While he was honored by the gift and recognition, reading the notes employees wrote on the postcards meant everything, "It was humbling and meaningful," Atkins shares. "And a reminder of how we all need to take the time to appreciate each other."

Celebrating careers—the big and small milestones—is something SkyWest embraces. Since 2004, they've partnered with O.C. Tanner to help create personalized presentations and give employees awards for years of service. With the launch of Yearbook, these celebrations have become even more meaningful.

With Atkin and through interviews with team members about what stood out from their own celebrations, it all comes back to hearing from the people who matter most.

"I received messages from people inside the company, from outside the company, and they brought in the first boss that took a chance and hired me. It just hit the mark," explains Marissa Snow, Director of Corporate Communications and People Programs, recounting her own ten-year event.

"The overriding thing that makes SkyWest what it is, is being connected and having deep, meaningful relationships with everyone you work with," adds Austin Mayer, Lead Travel Programs.



"If you take good care of the customer, create a great culture that attracts and keeps great people who believe in the same thing you do, you'll be successful."

—JERRY ATKIN, CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF SKYWEST, INC.

RIGHT, MARISSA SNOW, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND PEOPLE PROGRAMS AND AUSTIN MAYER, LEAD TRAVEL PROGRAMS; TOP, JERRY ATKIN, CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF SKYWEST, INC.

For Mayer, leading a celebration of a team member's tenth year became a team-building activity. "Everyone got involved, from planning the event, to the decorations, to highlighting all her accomplishments along the way."

"Recognition is one of those things really unique to what we do. It's about celebrating different milestones and different experiences people have in their lives," concludes Hazel Sainsbury, Manager of Corporate Communications. "As an employee, celebrating Jerry's fortieth felt like we were all coming together and were part of something great. That we were all part of this amazing footnote in history." **K**

