



Challenging Times for the *Airlines*

By Sarah Jane Lee

What are some problems plaguing the airline industry today? How are the airlines managing these challenges?



Through the ages, Man has conquered the skies by pioneering new ways to traverse the globe. Today, air travel enables countless wanderlust adventurers, relatives and friends separated by the seas, and business travellers, to commute with ease. This surge in demand for air travel has, however, given rise to a series of challenges, and addressing them is ¹paramount to tackling the dynamic nature of this vast industry.

One main challenge that the airline industry faces is its unintended contribution to climate deterioration and global warming. Flying typically requires the burning of jet fuels, and this releases greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. In 2019 alone, 4.5 billion passengers travelled across the globe, resulting in the release of a whopping 915 million tonnes of

carbon dioxide into the air. In addition to accelerating global temperatures, the accumulation of these gases risks cataclysmic consequences if jet fuels continue to be primarily used. A viable alternative to environmentally detrimental jet fuels takes the form of advanced biofuels, such as waste vegetable oil and Gevo. In 2018, Virgin Australia demonstrated this eco-friendly solution by fuelling 195 domestic and international flights. With global efforts steering towards biofuels, the ²dichotomous relationship between sustaining the industry's demand for air travel and negotiating healthier fuel options can be reconciled.



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In a more recent turn of events, a new challenge has emerged. The Covid-19 pandemic has called for restricted travel, causing all airlines to cancel numerous flights. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported a 55%

decrease in global airline traffic, with Asia Pacific threatened by a 50% dip in passenger demand in 2020. With fewer flights, many in the airline industry have been retrenched. The staff have been urged to consider ³furloughs or severance packages, causing an ⁴upheaval as many are reluctant to face the prospect of an indeterminate period of unemployment.



View the YouTube video. Due to the pandemic, many SIA cabin crew members have been suddenly asked to consider other work options that are in higher demand. How can one prepare for the unpredictable career moves in a world of constant change?

Singapore Airlines (SIA), Singapore's homegrown brand, has adopted a redeployment strategy to help its staff manage these uncertain times. It has redeployed some of its staff to manpower-intensive industries that are more in demand in current times, such as nursing and logistics. These SIA staff now find themselves occupied with work such as transporting groceries and supporting healthcare workers strained by the arduous task of caring for patients. With Covid-19 still pillaging through countries, this solution provides an avenue for airline staff to earn an income and serve those in need.



The airline industry should be on its toes and continuously adapt to potential ⁷conundrums it foresees in the future. While countries are slowly reopening their borders, the ⁸liminal space between resuscitating the economy and remaining vigilant to Covid-19's lethality has to be religiously observed.

References:

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Word Bank:

- 1 **paramount:**
more important than anything else
- 2 **dichotomous:**
involving two completely opposing ideas or things
- 3 **furloughs:**
periods of time that a worker is allowed to be absent
- 4 **upheaval:**
a great change, especially causing or involving much difficulty, activity or trouble
- 5 **redeployment:**
the assignment of employees or resources to a new place or task
- 6 **pillaging:**
stealing something from a place or person by using violence
- 7 **conundrums:**
problems that are difficult to deal with
- 8 **liminal:**
between or belonging to two different states