

## BA: United we stand campaign

### BA strike blame 'lies with those at the top'

**A member of British Airways' cabin crew, who has worked for the airline for more than 30 years, explains the reasons for the walkouts at the airline.**

BA's cabin crew are professional, caring towards their customers and proud to work for the national airline.

Our customers like to be served by competent, professional people who would deal swiftly and effectively with any emergency situation.

Cabin crew are trained fire-fighters, first-aiders who can administer certain drugs, have a knowledge of aircraft systems, deal with disputes onboard and can put handcuffs on disruptive passengers.

BA want a new fleet of cheaper staff. If existing staff want promotion, they will have to join the new fleet which earns only a flat rate of £2.60 per hour flying pay, with no meal allowances, overtime or long-range payments paid.

This will lead to a higher turnover of staff and less experience on board. New crew will operate the long-range trips, which will cost existing crew their jobs.

"We have families, mortgages and bills to pay - we cannot afford to lose £7,000 a year."

**BA cabin crew**

### Long history

Currently, basic pay is £12,000. It dropped from £17,000 in 1997 when BA introduced new pay scales for new crew.

To this basic sum can be added allowances for food whilst away overseas, overtime and extra payments for working 6.5 hours.

The level of allowance varies from £60 for a 3-day trip to India, to £800 for a 4-day trip to Japan - the difference being the cost of eating there and the longer-duty day.

The average total pay for BA main crew including allowances is similar to Virgin, about £22,000 (£12,000 to £14,000 basic plus £6,000 to £8,000 in allowances). Very few staff at the top reach the £50,000 peak quoted by BA to the press.

Virgin has a high turnover of staff which keeps its staff costs low and it has been operating for only 20 years, whereas BA is 60 years old.

Senior staff in BA will have served twice the length of Virgin's most senior staff, which explains why BA staff are more expensive on average.

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### 'Wrong path'

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BA is now run by accountants. It has been cutting back on the costs of food and amenities onboard. So a first-class passenger who has paid £3,000 for their seat is refused a steak because only six are loaded for 14 customers.

Sometimes, a first-class customer may only get their third-choice main meal. They advertise fine wines in first-class, but sometimes there is only one bottle of claret provided for 14 passengers.

Many times there are shortages of amenities such as wash bags, plates, cutlery and duvets which is just not good enough for the money the customer pays. Crew report these shortages but nothing is done to resolve the issue.

BA has the highest number of back-office staff per aircraft than any UK airline, according to Civil Aviation Authority figures. This is where cuts could be made.

Crew are frustrated and angry that they cannot give the service passengers expect. We are forever apologising instead of giving the good service they are used to. We can see that the management is taking the airline down the wrong path, but are powerless to influence them.

[BA chief executive] Willie Walsh and the board can only see pound signs before them, not the people behind the money who pay the fare.

### Financial losses

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“Taking strike action is against our ethics, but Walsh has forced us into this.”

**BA cabin crew**

Taking strike action is against the ethics of cabin crew. But we have families, mortgages and bills to pay - we cannot afford to lose £7,000 a year.

We don't want to disrupt the travel plans of our customers, but Willie Walsh won't listen and so industrial action is our only remaining weapon.

We apologise to our customers, but the blame lies with those at the top.

We know there is a recession, but Mr Walsh has thrown away the company's money on price-

fixing and cargo cartel fines, and on setting up the Open Skies business airline in a recession.

He needs to be held to account and not expect crew and customers to repay the money he has lost the company.

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