UNITED WILL STOP REPLACING EMPLOYEES WITH CONTRACTORS TO EASE LABOR TENSION

News / Airlines

United Continental Holdings Inc.told employees Friday that it's suspending the outsourcing of airport jobs after the practice was cited as workers' biggest concern.

Following 1,100 such reductions earlier this year to cut costs, United is now holding off on replacing employees with hires from outside the company at least until their union contracts become eligible for negotiation, according to a memo from Jon Roitman, senior vice president for airport operations. The change is effective immediately.

The move builds on efforts by new Chief Executive Officer Oscar Munoz to improve labor relations and customer experience at the world's second-largest airline. Acting CEO Brett Hart, who has replaced Munoz as he recovers from a heart attack, pledged Oct. 22 to continue that work.

"We fully understand how important this is, and while it's impossible to know what the airline environment will be like in 3 to 5 years, we can take steps today to provide you with more job security and reduce uncertainty," Roitman said Friday in the message to employees.

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United has the right to outsource front-line jobs at 16 airports, along with those of workers providing de-icing and United Express ground services at non-hub facilities. The Chicago-based airline couldn’t immediately say how many employees are affected by the decision.

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