WHY AREN'T THERE MORE FEMALE EXECUTIVES IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY?

News / Personalities

Women have no doubt been important to aviation history. Yet, the board rooms of airlines (not to mention the cockpit) have always been an old boy's club. And in 2015, we haven't seen much progress; there's still a lack of gender diversity in the industry's top levels that is frankly disappointing.

While it's common to see women working check-in counters and airport lounges, it's less likely to see one giving an interview about airline stock and strategy. That's because women make up less than 5% of of the industry's CEO's worldwide, according to Skift.

It's a serious problem, especially when it comes to hiring new blood. EasyJet's CEO Carolyn McCall (pictured above) told the International Air Transport Assocation (IATA):

(A)viation needs to open up more to women, and particularly to retain women in the pipeline so we can see more women in senior leadership positions. That is what will make the most change as these are the women who will be able to adapt the culture of companies to ensure more women stay in the workplace.

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IATA’s CEO and Director General, Tony Tyler, is planning to retire next year, and according to Skift has referred to his future replacement as a “he or she” — a good sign. Sort of.

But Tyler also said that change across the board is complicated:

The industry is made up, of course, of a number of a lot of different companies. Companies need to have policies that don’t stop the best people getting the job. If everyone acts on that basis, we should see more women getting to more senior positions.

Breaking that glass ceiling in the sky will obviously take some time — as it will in many other industries — but there are good examples of the winds changing in aviation, especially in Africa. South African Airways’ former CEO Siza Mzimela has just launched her own airline, and there are also a handful of organizations across the continent helping women to become entrepreneurs and experts in the industry.

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