



EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

ALAN JOYCE

Elena Ahmad/Flight Airline Business



Asia capacity has been a focus

“Alan has done an incredible job... it's a really great story”

PANEL JUDGE

Alan Joyce is part of a small group of airline chiefs to oversee a carrier's transition from the worst financial results in its history to record profits in only a few short years. At the same time, he has taken an iconic brand into new territory.

Dublin-born Joyce was elevated from the position of chief executive at budget arm Jetstar since its establishment in 2004 to lead the Qantas Group in 2008 following the retirement of Geoff Dixon.

He would start making waves three years later when, amid disputes with unions, Joyce made the unprecedented move of locking out workers and grounding its worldwide fleet for two days. That forced the Australian government to intervene, opening up new flexibility in its labour arrangements.

In 2014, Qantas made its largest ever net loss of A\$2.8 billion (\$2.1 billion), largely driven by one-off restructuring charges. Joyce survived calls for his head, and used that as a catalyst to implement a rapid transformation programme.

The three-year programme has

involved cutting 5,000 jobs, increasing technological innovation, seeking operational efficiencies and cutting maintenance costs. Alongside that, Joyce sought to make new investments in hard product, drive up revenue from its loyalty business, and deliver higher levels of staff engagement.

The fruit of that came through in the airline's 2016 results, with the carrier reporting a record underlying profit of A\$1.53 billion. The transformation programme is expected to deliver A\$2.1 billion in savings by the end of June, while it has also made it cost-competitive against rivals Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific, and domestic foe Virgin Australia.

Financial wins aside, Joyce told *Flight Airline Business* in 2015 he was proud that through the process, Qantas had managed to improve its customer ratings and employee engagement.

“I think most airlines that have gone through that transformation wouldn't say that they've got all three of those right at the same time. That trifecta has been the real success of the programme.”

Joyce has also overseen some major changes to Qantas' international network. The Qantas group – including Jetstar – now has over half of its capacity focused on the fast-growing Asian region.

Joyce also oversaw a shift away from its decades-long joint business with British Airways on European routes to an arrangement with Emirates in 2013.

The international network is entering a new growth phase as it starts to replace its Boeing 747-400s with 787-9s.

Qantas' loyalty unit has now moved into its own-branded health insurance, credit cards and even digital customer analytics, further diversifying the airline's revenue base.

Aside from his role as a corporate leader, Joyce has been a campaigner on causes including indigenous education, prostate cancer awareness and gay marriage. Speaking on the sidelines of the IATA annual general meeting in June, he said: “If you're not active in the social issues, your brand does pay for it.”

Ellis Taylor

PAST WINNERS

2016 Michael O'Leary, Ryanair | 2015 Willie Walsh, International Airlines Group | 2014 Temel Kotil, Turkish Airlines | 2013 James Hogan, Etihad Airways | 2012 Shinchiro Ito, All Nippon Airways | 2011 Kong Dong, Air China | 2010 Richard Anderson, Delta Air Lines | 2009 Enrique Cueto, LAN | 2008 Wolfgang Mayrhober, Lufthansa | 2007 Jean-Cyril Spinetta and Leo van Wijk, Air France-KLM | 2006 Gerard Arpey, American Airlines | 2005 Geoff Dixon, Qantas | 2004 Willie Walsh, Aer Lingus | 2003 Rod Eddington, British Airways | 2002 Xabier de Irala, Iberia