

Southwest Announces EVP Bob Jordan as Next CEO

On the heels of Southwest Airlines celebrating our 50th Anniversary, and after 35 years of LUV with my Southwest Family, the time feels right for Southwest to start its next chapter. I have made the decision to relinquish the [title of CEO](#) in early 2022. Having celebrated 50 amazing years on June 18, we talked about flipping the page to begin work on the next chapter for Southwest. With that in mind, I'm delighted to announce Executive Vice President Corporate Services [Bob Jordan](#) as our next CEO, beginning on Feb. 1, 2022.

Rest assured, I'm not going anywhere, though. I will remain with Southwest through the transition and serve as Executive Chairman, at least through 2026 and at the discretion of the Board. As Executive Chairman, I will focus on business and fleet strategies, Governmental and Airport Affairs, and leading the Board of Directors for Southwest. Also, I will continue to serve as Chairman for [Airlines for America](#).

Succession planning is one of the most important jobs of a CEO, and it's something I've spent a lot of time thinking about and working on with our Board of Directors. I've said this before, but it truly feels as if we are at the dawn of a new era as a Company. There is no doubt in my mind that this the right time to announce this transition, and Bob is the right Leader to be Southwest's next CEO.

This will be a transition over many months. And, as I mentioned, once Bob assumes the role in February, I will continue to stay closely connected to the cause that is Southwest Airlines. I have had many blessings in my life; I'm most grateful for my family, and for my Southwest Family. I always have felt a tremendous sense of gratitude to those who came before me. Looking ahead, I am confident in the next generation of Southwest Leaders to continue a great legacy, and I look forward to being along for the ride in my next role.



Gary

Kelly (left) and Bob Jordan (right)

So, What About Bob?

He's a 33-year Southwest veteran, currently serving as our Executive Vice President Corporate Services. Bob and I have worked side-by-side for more than 30 years. He's a great Leader, is passionate about Southwest and our People, and is well-prepared to take on this important role. Bob and I will work closely with our President [Tom Nealon](#) and our Chief Operating Officer [Mike Van de Ven](#) to begin developing transition plans in the coming months. We have a powerful Team to lead us forward into the next 50 years.

For those who have not met Bob, I am eager for you to get to know him. Bob has a heart of gold who loves and cherishes our beloved Company and our People as much as anyone I know.

In our [news release](#), Bob shared, "I'm humbled, honored, and excited to be asked to serve as the next CEO. The Heart of Southwest is our People; they make the difference for our Customers, and I look forward to serving them. We have a terrific Team of Leaders, many of whom I have had the

joy of working alongside for decades. I'm looking forward to working with Gary, Mike, and Tom on the transition effort and setting up Southwest for the next 50 years of giving Customers the Freedom to Fly."



Southwest Airlines' Leadership (left to right): Bob Jordan, Mike Van de Ven, Gary Kelly, and Tom Nealon

To learn more about Bob, please enjoy the below Q&A that he shared with our Employees last week.

Q: What does it feel like to be named the future CEO of Southwest Airlines?

A: "I feel so many emotions—excited, grateful, humbled, and ready. When I started at Southwest in 1988 as a programmer, I could never have dreamed this could be possible, but at Southwest Airlines, all things are possible. I'm grateful for Gary and the fact that he is staying as Executive Chairman, grateful to the Board for their confidence in me and allowing for the time to transition well and intentionally, and grateful to the wonderful People of Southwest Airlines. This is a big job, and the greatest Company and People in the world, and I don't take that responsibility lightly. I

have a lot to learn—I'm human, and will make mistakes, but I can promise that you will get my absolute best.”

Q: When does the new role go into effect?

A: “The role becomes official in February of next year, but I will go to work with Gary and our Leaders quickly to ensure we have a great transition plan and are ready when that time comes. I'm extremely thankful for the group of Leaders we have here at Southwest. I have been blessed to work with most of them for more than a decade, and several for more than 30 years. It's the most talented, dedicated, Team of Leaders we have ever had and we are ready to lead Southwest into the next 50 years.”

Q: What is your vision of the future for Southwest Airlines?

A: “I have been blessed to have a very diverse career and set of assignments during my 33 years at Southwest. Gary especially has given me so many opportunities to work in different areas of the Company, as well as the broad leadership role as President of AirTran during the integration, and Gary, Colleen, Herb, Tom, and many, many others mentored and sponsored me along the way. Because of that, I have been part of our strategic planning for a long time, and know that we have a great plan. We have a great plan to continue to emerge from the pandemic, continue to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, and restore our financial health. Right now, it's all about continuing to be nimble, executing, and for me especially, using the next few months to ensure the transition goes really, really well.”

Q: What are some of the things you hope to do right away?

A: “Change, even the anticipation of change, creates both excitement and uncertainty. Those can be distractions, and as we continue to emerge from the pandemic, we need to continue to be laser-focused. I plan to spend considerable time out with our Employees, so that we can get to know each other better, as well as spend time with our Leaders, right away. In addition to traveling, the tools we learned and used in the last year also afford us an opportunity to reach so many People quickly, and communicate frequently and informally.”

Q: What do you expect will be some of your greatest challenges?

A: “There are always challenges, there have been during my entire 33-year career at Southwest—intense competition, new airlines, cost pressures, 9/11, gulf wars, high fuel prices, and most vividly, the pandemic. The People of Southwest Airlines, and the Warrior Spirit, never back away from a challenge—as Mike Van de Ven always says, “winners win!” If we can stay focused on the basics, like living our Southwest Way values each and every day, serving each other and our

Customers every single day, realizing that change is constant and just a part of life, and always seeing ourselves as the scrappy startup, there is no challenge we can't overcome, and nothing we can't do together. It's going to be a GREAT start to the next 50 years!"