

Pilot files intellectual property lawsuit against Delta

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A pilot has filed suit against Delta Air Lines, alleging the company stole his idea for a text messaging platform used by crews.

The [messaging app](#), which was rolled out in 2018, is used by gate agents, flight dispatchers, pilots, [flight attendants](#) and other workers who hustle to get planes out on time. They text updates on the status of everything from cleaning, catering, fueling and loading bags.

It replaced a decades-old mish-mash of communications by two-way radios, jetway phones, word of mouth and jaunts down the jet bridge to relay messages, according to Delta.

The suit by pilot Craig Alexander was filed in DeKalb County state court. In it, he says he shared his idea for a crew messaging app with the company before Delta's app was introduced. The complaint names Delta, CEO Ed Bastian, [chief information officer](#) Rahul Samant and other executives as defendants.

The lawsuit is seeking damages estimated at more than \$1 billion for "stolen trade secrets and the unjust enrichment to Delta."

"Captain Alexander spent countless hours and more than \$100,000 of his own money developing this innovative, game-changing communications platform for Delta, only to have his own employer steal it right out from under him like a thief in the night," Morgan & Morgan attorneys John Morgan and Keenan Nix said in a written statement.

Delta, for its part, issued a statement saying: "While we take the allegations specified in Mr. Alexander's Complaint seriously, they are not an accurate or fair description of Delta's development of its internal crew messaging platform."

Alexander, a Delta first officer on the Boeing 767 and 757, alleges he originally designed a text messaging system called "QrewLive" for crew members to resolve pre-flight departure issues. He said he presented it to Delta executives over several years, starting in 2014.

He alleges he received "verbal assurances that Delta would purchase his innovative text messaging platform." But, in 2017, Delta told him the text [messaging](#) system did not fit its needs.

The following year, Delta announced the launch of its Flight Family Communication app.

Alexander alleges the Delta platform was developed by using QrewLive, "even though the entire project was subject to a confidential non-disclosure agreement."

The complaint also alleges the Flight Family Communication app is saving Delta "hundreds of millions of dollars per year" by increasing on-time departures.

In 2018, Delta announced it had seen a 65% increase in its ability to get time-crunched flights out on time when there were circumstances such as late-arriving aircraft.

On an average day, Delta said about 11,000 messages were sent using the Flight Family Communication platform—and even more when bad weather disrupts flights.

Delta said the app was one of a number of digital tools it had rolled out for employees over a couple of years, including a handheld tool for gate agents to help customers with seat changes and rebookings, handheld devices for [flight](#) attendants and a weather app for pilots.

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