

Boeing promotes insider to chief operating officer, putting her in the discussion about the next CEO

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Stephanie Pope, CEO of Boeing global services, attends a press conference in Le Bourget, north of Paris, France, June 20, 2023. Boeing said Monday, Dec. 11, that Pope will become executive vice president and chief operating officer on Jan. 1. Pope has spent nearly 30 years at Boeing, and has been CEO of the company's services business since last year. Credit: AP Photo/Lewis Joly, File

Boeing has promoted the head of its services business to chief operating officer, putting the female executive in discussion as a potential heir apparent to CEO David Calhoun in a male-dominated industry.

Boeing said Monday that Stephanie Pope's elevation to the job, which includes the title of executive vice president, takes effect Jan. 1.

Pope has spent nearly 30 years at Boeing, holding down key financial jobs in the company's defense, commercial airplanes and services divisions. She became CEO of the services unit last year.

Some industry observers were quick to tap Pope, 51, as a contender to become the aerospace company's next CEO. Richard Aboulafia, managing director of aerospace consultant AeroDynamic Advisory, named Pope and Chief Financial Officer Brian West as potential successors to Calhoun.

Calhoun, 66, has held the top job since January 2020, when he replaced Dennis Muilenburg, who was fired during the fallout from two [fatal crashes](#) involving Boeing 737 Max jets. Calhoun, however, has shown no indication that he plans to retire anytime soon.

Days after Calhoun turned 64 in 2021, Boeing raised the retirement age for CEO from 65 to 70—he won't reach that age until early 2028. In February of this year, the company board gave Calhoun a \$5.3 million retention grant that doesn't vest until 2025.

Boeing has struggled with manufacturing and supply-chain problems that have interrupted production of the Max and a larger airliner, the 787 Dreamliner. It has also suffered setbacks in military programs, including a contract with the U.S. Air Force to build two new presidential jets.

The company lost \$2.2 billion in the [first nine months of this year](#) after

losing more than \$5 billion last year. However, it has a huge backlog of orders for commercial planes, as airlines look to update their fleets with more fuel-efficient models.

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