

Cyril Turner



One day, I didn't want to go to school, so I said school was closed in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. My mother found out I was lying and was upset but also thought it was insightful for a 10-year-old boy. This was 1971, long before anybody considered observing Martin Luther King Day. I laugh to think I might have been among the earliest to think of his birthday as a holiday.

Cyril Turner has always been inventive and creative. As a kid, he spent lots of time building and fixing things with his father and showing that he had an interest in becoming an engineer. So, later, he studied applied physics at Morehouse College and mechanical engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, receiving diplomas from both prestigious schools within a two-month span.

But, while still an undergraduate student, he also learned about a program called "Summer Venture in Management" offered by Harvard Business School. He attended, and the experience convinced him that his real career passion was to be involved in the business world. Turner applied and was accepted to the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. While at Wharton, he also participated in an exchange program at the London Business School in England. "This was my first time living out of the country for an extended

period of time," he recalls. "To be surrounded by bright people from all over the globe gave me a much more worldly perspective."

Today, he puts that expanded world view to good use as vice president of Delta Air Lines and president of Delta Global Services (DGS), a \$230 million company with 7500 employees that operates in 55 cities in the U. S. and in Nassau, the Bahamas. As president of DGS, Turner quickly established a theme of integrity, revenue growth, and productivity that resulted in a 92 percent increase in operating income within his first year. Under his leadership, DGS is now on track toward another 30 percent increase in operating income in 2010, despite a severely depressed economic environment.

"Cyril's key strengths are his leadership, creativity, and innovation in developing and implementing business initiatives and solutions – and his seemingly endless energy," observes

Delta executive vice president and Chief Operating Officer Stephen E. Gorman, who nominated Turner for the Eagle Award.

While leading the formation of strategic growth initiatives at Delta, Turner is also active in his community. He serves on the executive board of Junior Achievement of Georgia, participates in the Georgia 100 Mentoring Program, has chaired Georgia's Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation campaign, and has been on the boards of the First Montessori School of Atlanta and the DeKalb County School System Foundation.

One reason Turner has always been so inspired about education is that, at age six, he got some sage advice. "I remember sitting on a park bench when my grandfather asked what I wanted to do when I grew up," he explains. "I don't recall my answer, but I do remember his response. He said, 'You can do whatever you want to do, but you must first get a good education.' He added, 'No one can take away your knowledge or your ability to think.' To my memory, that was the first time that someone really asked me what I wanted to do in life and gave me guidance."

Turner now leans on his own wisdom to help guide others. He mentors young professionals both inside and outside of his company and he encourages them to take risks. After a lifetime of standing up for his convictions, he has learned—and he shares with his mentees—that you will never reach your full potential without having the courage to take a risk.

CareerFOCUS Magazine[™] and the National Eagle Leadership Institute[®] salute 2010 Eagle Award winner Cyril Turner.

The Leadership Promise at Delta Air Lines

Delta's founder, C.E. Woolman, said it best: "All airlines are alike – only people make them different." Woolman's words are echoed in our philosophy that diversity is achieved not just by providing opportunities to leaders of all backgrounds, but by demonstrating a willingness to consider multiple perspectives in every area we do business. As the world's largest airline, serving more cultures than any other carrier, Delta is proud to support a diverse group of high-performance leaders. We emphasized our commitment to diversity this year with the addition of "Leading Diversity" as a High Performing Attribute against which all Delta leaders and merit employees are measured. That group is supported through comprehensive training that fosters leadership, team development, and conflict resolution. We strategically focus on recruiting diverse talent through partnerships with numerous organizations. And we strive every day to provide a workplace where all of our employees know they are valued and respected.

Cyril Turner At-a-Glance

Nominating Company

Delta Air Lines

Current Position

Vice President of Delta Air Lines and President of Delta Global Services

Professional Milestones

- Executive Sponsor, Delta's Black Employees Network
- Member, Delta Supplier Diversity Group
- Member, The Urban League

Community Leadership

- Board Member, Leadership Atlanta
- Board Member, C5 Youth Foundation
- Board Member, Junior Achievement of Georgia

Leadership Principle

Be curious and creative. Have a passion for understanding how things work, and then make them better.

Education/Training

- B.S., Morehouse College
- B.S., Georgia Institute of Technology
- M.B.A., The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Birthplace

Chicago, IL

Current Home

Atlanta, GA