

Airlink Prepares for Leadership Change in 2025

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Johannesburg-based Airlink has announced a significant change in its leadership, with CEO and Managing Director Rodger Foster set to step down at the end of March 2025. After nearly 33 years at the helm, Foster will pass on the leadership to de Villiers Engelbrecht, currently the Chief Financial Officer, effective April 1, 2025.

Foster, who co-founded Airlink in 1992 alongside Barrie Webb, has been a pivotal figure in the airline's history, steering it through the deregulation of South Africa's domestic airline industry and overseeing its growth from a small operator to a significant regional airline. Under his leadership, Airlink was established using the assets of the insolvent Link Airways and grew to provide critical air connections to smaller centers in South Africa, initially operating from what was then Jan Smuts International Airport.

During his tenure, Foster faced numerous challenges including Airlink's separation from South African Airways and the COVID-19 pandemic's severe impacts on travel. Despite these challenges, he guided the airline towards stability and growth, reinforcing its role in regional aviation. Upon stepping down, Foster will continue to serve as a non-executive director and remain a shareholder, contributing to Airlink's strategic direction.

De Villiers Engelbrecht, who has been with Airlink for over two decades, will take over as CEO. Engelbrecht has been deeply involved in key aspects of the airline's operations, having served as a non-executive director before joining as an executive in 2011. His extensive experience within Airlink and his instrumental role during critical periods for the company prepare him well to lead the airline into its next chapter.

Engelbrecht's leadership will commence in a period of strength for Airlink, with the airline operating 67 Embraer regional jets and having served more than four million passengers in the 2024 financial year. Airlink now flies to 50 destinations in 15 countries, including places like Madagascar and St Helena Island. The airline's strong performance is further bolstered by a strategic equity investment from Qatar Airways Group, which acquired a 25% stake in 2024, enhancing its financial stability and growth prospects.

This leadership transition occurs at a time when Airlink has established a strong operational foundation and expanded its network through significant partnerships with global airlines, enhancing its market presence and connectivity. With the continued guidance of Foster and the fresh perspective of Engelbrecht, Airlink is well-positioned to maintain its growth trajectory and adapt to the evolving aviation landscape.

As Airlink looks forward to this new era of leadership under Engelbrecht, the airline remains committed to

delivering excellent service and expanding its reach, ensuring it continues to meet the needs of its passengers and stakeholders in the dynamic field of regional aviation.

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