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The Boeing Co. (BA)

Morgan Stanley Industrials Conference
Here's going on right now that the cycle's ending. What's your perspective on that?

Raymond Conner

Well, we certainly don't see that. Nothing that would indicate to us, that demand has fallen off across the board. I mean we see 36,000 airplanes over the next 20 years. And obviously the single-aisle being the big driver of that but also the wide-bodies too.

So nothing that we see in terms of demand, in terms of cancellations to furled. Anything like that would indicate that the cycle's slowing down for us. One thing that I would say that I don't people are giving enough credit to the replacement market that's out there today. It's a huge, huge number.

Got it. And I think one of the things that I at least hear from investors is the look at what's going on in some of those geographies and the profitability is, it's on decline in a couple of geographies. I'm not sure, are there big pockets of demand for new orders that you – like where would you kind of point to as something that's underappreciated?

Raymond Conner

Well, I mean clearly, China's going to be the big driver as we look forward. We see 6,000 airplanes over the course of the next 20 years. And that's just going to keep growing and when you look at the population of the world, China, Indonesia and India, 40% of the population but only 14% of the fleet. So there's a big opportunity in all three of those areas clearly. And that's going to be a benefit for us, all of us. And then you look at replacement, you look at growth, you look at traffic. Traffic continues to be at 5% and then you look at fleet growth about 4% and replacement 3%. That's 6% to 7% of the fleet today. That needs to be changed over. So, that's a big number.

Got it. Can we talk a little bit about some program specifics? The 737 program, we've heard quite a lot about it. It seems like there's still very, very strong demand for the narrow-body aircraft. What are you hearing from customers?
Raymond Conner

Well, the demand hasn’t slowed down a bit. I mean, it’s just amazing actually how strong the demand is not only for the MAX, but also for the 737 NG. We’re constantly having to move things around and stuff to try to satisfy as much as we can. And we’re at – with our production rate, we’re at 42 a month right now today, going to 47 in 2017, but we see a lot of pressure to go higher than that. And as we look at it today, we’re kind of narrowing in on a 52-a-month production rate.

Can you talk a little bit about the supply chain? You think the supply chain is ready for that?

Raymond Conner

Yeah, I do. I mean, we wouldn’t be thinking about that if we didn’t think they were. We have a lot of people in the supply chain today working with our suppliers. We’ve gone through these production rate increases, particularly on the 737, really well. We prepared well. We knew exactly where we needed to increase our focus, and the supply chain has done a marvelous job of taking the rates up. And I don’t see any reason why they can’t execute like that going forward as well. And then we all prepared for something – when we went to 47, we were preparing for the possibility of something higher, too.

And is there anything about the MAX transition that makes taking rate up more challenging?

Raymond Conner

Well, it’s a pretty straightforward transition. We’re going to be taking one down and bringing another one up. It’s not a bunch of changes. It’s primarily the propulsion change and then some of the things around that. I think having the dual configurations for a little while can always make things a little bit challenging, but nothing that we wouldn’t – that we’re super concerned about. Spirit, I think has a very good plan. That’s where the structure work is taking place, and then of course in our factory, it’s more about the joint installation and then final assembly.

GE, because they’re going to be producing both -7, CFM-7s and then they’re moving into the LEAPs. I think they’ve got a very good plan around that in terms of how they’re going to split the work up and where they’re doing to that work.

Got it. You put a little bit of bullishness at the conference on the A321Neo from some of the customers and from some of the leasing companies. How do you kind of think about the narrow body battle, so to speak, versus Airbus?
Sure. Well, I think you have to look at — then you go and you look at the entire, single out where the demand is and 70% of the demand sits in the 737, -8, A320, 70% of the demand. Now, the 321, it’s about 20% out there and the dash-9. But the heart of the market is still in that -8, 320 time. So what do you want it in size? And so what do you want to do is you want to focus and buy a family of airplanes that is mostly there. And that 737, that’s one of the reasons why the -8 is such a great airplane is because it has a superior operating cost advantage over the A321 or the A320.

And then do you want to buy a family member for just 20% of those extra routes and such? That’s why I think we have a big advantage and that’s why we’ve been able to do so well. And then when we did the new airplane that we just announced was just playing to that strength of the [ph] eight (05:59) and putting more seats into it for the low-cost carriers which is a much lower risk solution than trying to go all the way up to a 321.

Got it, got it. And some investors sort to speculate that, look, eventually, a new narrow body is going to be the direction that we have to go. What are your thoughts there?

Well, we don’t have anything in play right now. We’re pretty focused on getting the 737 MAX into the marketplace and those kinds of things. I think we’d be looking more into the next decade for that one.

Got it.

But we’re always looking at different things as we move forward.

Sure. Can we talk a little bit about wide-bodies?

Sure.
777, very topical. Just first of all on the 777-300ER bridge, how are you thinking about it? There is a little bit of skepticism in the market.

Raymond Conner

Well, we are – we're sold out through 2015, virtually, all the way through 2016. I think the neat thing we've got going for us on the 777 is that we have a fleet of 1,200 airplanes out there. Almost 70 customers, that's a big strong base. We're adding new customers all the time, which is a very good thing when you're trying to expand your fleet and all that.

But the other thing to think about is that 40% of that fleet is over 10 years old. So there's going to be a significant replacement cycle there. And when you couple that with the 777X, the airplanes that you would buy today or through that bridge would be the last airplanes that you would move out as you pick up the 777X. The airplanes that you're buying that they have the older airplanes would be the ones with the 777X would then replace first.

So I think that there is going to be a significant amount of demand on both the growth and on the replacement cycle for the airplane. When we look forward, we have 300 airplanes in the backlog. We got 150 options to fill that bridge. We fill like about 50 planes per year, and we've sold in from deals already this year, 43, and we'll do – we've got a number of things already in work for the remainder of the year. So I'm feeling pretty bullish on the bridge as we look forward.

Got it. And then, triple...

Raymond Conner

And the other thing I would also say...

Sure.

Raymond Conner

...is that we have a nice freighter in that marketplace that nothing else – that there is no other freighter out there. There is no new freighter for that size, 110-ton freighter to an engine, no 777X freighter, there's no 787X freighter – I mean, 787 freighter either. So, I think the combination of those two things I think are very important.

And care to offer an update on air cargo freighter demand, what are you hearing?
Raymond Conner

Well, it's been down for a few years now, but we have seen a tick-up. The world trade has picked up, and as a result of that, we saw a 4% increase in the cargo market. So I think things are starting to turn there, which will, in turn, help the freighter demand as we move forward.

Sure. Can we talk a little bit about the 777X?

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

Just first of all, in terms of incremental demand, I mean, I've heard very good things from customers about the aircraft. On the other hand, we do hear this idea that you can't get one until 2022 or...

[ph] We will say 777 (09:29).

Fair enough. But do you think that 777X orders could still – I mean is there still a lot to go there? I mean, how do we think about the cadence just given that we're talking about orders?

Raymond Conner

Well, we had quite a bit of surge there...

Yeah.

... [indiscernible] (09:46) today but there's still a tremendous amount of demand. And people are going to want to get their positions locked down as we move forward. I don't see it as a big concern.
Got it. And there's been a little bit of a debate with the 777X. We haven't really seen lessors participate. On the other hand, with A330 Neo, a lot of lessors. How do you kind of read the T leads there?

Raymond Conner

I mean, we've been in – most of our conversation has been with the airlines. At this particular point, you got to generate the interest there. The leasing guys will come along. And we've had a number of leasing guys approaches. So, it's not that there hasn't – it just hasn't been very public in that respect.

Got it, got it. And then just kind of expanding the wide-body conversation a little bit, A330 Neo.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

Competitive landscape is changing a little bit. Certainly, some people are excited about that aircraft.

Raymond Conner

Sure.

How do you think about it?

Raymond Conner

I think that it's going to be an airplane that will sell some product. I mean, it will. They have a lot of availability. And as you look at the 787, we're going up to 12 and then to 14, and then you look at 777. I think though when you look at the airplane A330 Neo and particularly when you compare it to the family of 787, there is a significant operating cost advantage that goes along with the 787. And there's a lot of things you can do on price, but that advantage is worth tens of millions of dollars over the course of the life of the airplane.

And if you're looking for a long-term solution, are you going to want to go with an airplane that has that kind of disadvantage or with one that has an advantage? Maybe if you're looking for a near-term solution, that would be the right one, but it's a check you have to write, every single flight, every single day. And that's the difference between flying an A330 Neo or flying a 787 family or 777X for that matter.
Got it. And do you think that the A330Neo might put any kind of pricing pressure on 777 or the 787?

Raymond Conner

Well I mean primarily it bounces up against the 787 and when you look at the revenue advantage that we have both in terms of seats and cargo, the operating from a fuel burn standpoint, the maintenance cost advantage, the residual value advantage, I think we can justify a pretty significant value difference between the two of our airplanes. I think it really becomes down to then just pure competition and see what the airlines want to do. But we're ready to do that.

Got it. Can we talk a little bit about 747.

Raymond Conner

Sure.

There's an update on the outlook there.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

I mean not really seeing tremendous amount of orders.

Raymond Conner

No.

How do you think about it?
Raymond Conner

Well you know so much of the airplane; the order is about the freight market. And right now all the airplanes that we have in the production system today are passenger. So, when the passenger planes start to get into the marketplace, I think there will be people see how nice the airplane. How well it performs. Lufthansa loves the airplane and it's performing great in our system, very profitable for them. The operating cost is very good and the passengers love them.

So, I think as we get more passengers out there, there'll be more demand for that airplane, but really it’s about the cargo side in terms of the 747. And I think as things start to kick up on the cargo demand, then we'll start to see some more orders start to kick in again. We've got lot of things in play though.

Q

Got it. And just taking a step back as you think about Boeing as wide body portfolio versus Airbus.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

Q

How do you kind of size up the competitive dynamic overall?

Raymond Conner

Well, I mean we've taken an approach that we go with a strong family of airplanes. We are 10% to 15% – excuse me 20% to 15% seat increments, but we always want to be the most efficient in every particular market segment, and that's what we are today, whether it's 787 family against the A330, 800, and 900 – I got to get used to saying that, 800 and 900 – or against the A350 with the 787-9, or even then moving into the 777X, 8X against the A350-1000, and of course the 777-9X is kind of sitting by itself. And even as you go up into the 747, I mean, it's significantly more efficient than it is – than the A380.

So, in every single market segment, our view is to have the greatest efficiency and then have operational flexibility across the family whereby you can have the same flight crews flying the different airplanes and you can kind of mix and match with seasonal demand. So, I think that provides us a tremendous amount of advantage as we look forward now. So, you have the A330, separate family. Now, you go one, the A350 and the A350-1000, and you got to go up against the 777X. So, it's a – I think I feel good about our wide-body family at this point.

Q

Great. I often get asked about market share, and I guess...
Raymond Conner

Yeah.

....there are a couple of questions there. I mean, number one is how market share-focused should we be. And number two is when we think about the product portfolios here, is this a market that just seems to balance at 50%, or is there a real reason why Boeing might have the lead in wide bodies or narrow bodies going forward?

Raymond Conner

Well, I think it fluctuates a little bit year-to-year. It just kind of depends a little bit. But I think since we came into the market with the MAX, we’ve split pretty much 50/50, and then years we’ve been ahead. On the wide bodies, we’ve been – we’ve done pretty well over the course of the last several years, and I think that’s kind of where – that’s where we want to be strong. And we want to be able to really play strongly on the single aisle, too. It gets to be a point of you can’t go chase market share and start to destroy your margins either, and we’re planned – we want to play for our margin and we also want to play for meeting the demand of our customers. And right now, I think we have a very good balance on how we do that.

Got it. Can we talk a little bit in more detail on the 787?

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

Just thinking back to the Investor Day earlier this year. I think one of the big themes was the power of normalizing that rate, just seen so many rate increases on the 787. Can you talk about what that means for the supply chain, for margins, for the employees...

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

...[ph] fluidity (16:31)?
Raymond Conner

Well, I mean we’ve been on this pretty hefty climb over the course of the last couple of years here. And then we brought a major derivative. And when I say major derivative, I really mean a major derivative on the -9. And we brought that while we are increasing rate 40%. I mean, so that was a big challenge for all of us.

So bringing those two things together, now today is kind of where we’re focused on stabilizing and getting the -9 and the -8 mixed together at that [indiscernible] (17:01) rate. And what means is this kind of give ourselves a nice long run where we can really get all the manufacturing processes down so we can put these airplanes down the same lines whether it’s an -8 or -9. And then there’s an awful lot of customer intros now with the -9 because it’s the new airplane into the family.

And so we’re seeing a lot of that activity too. But I think that’s when I – when we say we want to stabilize, that’s where we get at. How do we – all the configuration changes, how do we get 8 to 9s running down the same line and then we’ll increase the rate again as we stabilize and bring the -10 in there after that, and that will have the third family. But the 10, you got to think about the 10 as just – is really a derivative of the 9. So, most of the work – that’s why I say major. Most of the work was done on the 9, and then we just extended the 9 to get to 10.

And as you know, there’s a big debate on deferred production. There’s a sense out there that perhaps deferred production is going to float a little bit higher than that magic $25 billion number. What can you tell us...

Raymond Conner

The approximate $25 billion.

Yes.

Raymond Conner

Okay.

What can you tell us about the deferred production trend? Are we – how much confidence can we have that that’s the right number?

Raymond Conner

Well, what we’ve said is as we take the rates up to 12 a month in 2016, that’s when you’ll start to see this thing come down because we’ll be bringing – as we do the rate increases and as we bring the – and as you saw, when we
brought the -9 in, we do some things from a production standpoint and from a supplier standpoint. We build inventory. We put some space in between so we can introduce these things.

And as you’ve taken the rate, sometimes you build ahead, particularly in the supply chain, so you can kind of transition through these things a little bit easier. We’re going to make those kinds of decisions, what’s best for the program, what’s best for unit cost, all that. And we’ll continue to make those decisions, but I would still anticipate that you would be as we get to 2016 and you’ll start to see that come down.

Got it. So, the important point is the trajectory there in 2016...

Raymond Conner

Yeah. Yeah.

...coming down we feel confident about.

Raymond Conner

Right.

Okay. That’s very helpful. Can we talk about partnering for success a bit?

Raymond Conner

Sure.

It’s been a big theme internally for quite some time. It’s very difficult of investors to track the progress. On the other hand, when we meet with you and go to the Investor Day, those sorts of things, I mean, it’s clear that there’s some momentum. And anything you can kind of tell us?

Raymond Conner

Yeah. This really – I mean, you try to – it is about trying to partner together, it’s not just a big stick, about how do we work together to try to get more efficiency and then sharing that efficiency. We’ve had about 500 suppliers
participate in that. We’ve got 40% that are in firm agreements now, another 30% that we’re very close to just kind of finalizing, and then we got the other remaining 30% that we’ve got to get really engaged with.

So I think, overall, the program has done – has delivered what we had hoped for, which was double-digit reductions and those kinds of things. So, I think, in general, I mean, we’ve made some really big strides across the board and I think it’s starting to manifest itself. And it may manifest itself further out. Well, that’s what we’re trying to do is make sure that we’re in the right position as we look forward, particularly, as we go on to these higher production rates.

And when we think about the rest, the contracts that still need to be signed, what’s the timeline? Is there any boundary you could put? Are we talking about...

Raymond Conner

No. I mean, we’ll continue to work those. So, I mean, it’s not that – we’ve had some of the ones we want to get done first. We only have so much bandwidth to get some of that stuff done. So we got that 40%, then we move into 30%. So we’re just kind of taking them as we go here.

Got it.

Raymond Conner

There’s not a real timeline around this stuff.

And as we think about sort of the incentive offer to suppliers, when you think about some of the rate increases that we have for 777X, kind of where are we in the process of deciding all of the – exactly who’s on what program and at the process?

Raymond Conner

Well, that’s going on right now.

Yeah.
Raymond Conner

I mean, and you would think that it would need to be because we're going to start moving into those final stages of firm configuration. We'll be set on the 777X next year so we got to get a lot of those things nailed down here soon.

Can we talk a little bit about R&D and the trend going forward.

Raymond Conner

Yes.

We've got a few things going on. We have the MAX. We have the 777X.

Raymond Conner

Yeah, yeah.

How should we think about the trajectory from here?

Raymond Conner

Well, I think a little modest increase next year which, the 9 is coming off now and the MAX is kind of, coming up and will start to, kind of complete off and then you got a little bit of spend on the 777X. So, I think a little bit modest slight increase for next year that's you probably the way you should think about it.

Got it. And can you remind us when we think about something like the 777X, the wing.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.
It sounds kind of complicated. There's a debate on...

Raymond Conner

The big wing.

There's a debate on exactly how complicated it could be and what that might mean for R&D. Can you just remind us sort of how many years in advance the 777X might we see that R&D built?

Raymond Conner

Well, I mean, we are knocking down buildings now. And we have people working on all those things right now. We're going to be bringing in a lot of the production system type activity over the course of the next several years. So we'll start clearing buildings out and start putting new buildings up and start placing the POs for the capital equipment and those kind of things necessary to build that wing.

Fair enough. And how can we have confidence that the wing isn't too ambitious? Or it's not too technically complex?

Raymond Conner

Well, I mean, this is the fourth generation and we did the -8, then we turned around did the -9 which is significant, actually we did a bit major change on the -8 earlier on in the program and then we went from there to the -9 which had another slight change doing a lot. And then the -10 is not a lot of change but a little bit of change.

So, I think we've been around the wing now for quite some time and this will be the fourth one that we've done. So I think we understand the composite nature of the wing and how to design and how to build it. Of course, we didn't build it but we've been very involved with the Mitsubishi guys over the course of – since the very beginning of the program. It was very closely done with us highly involved. So we have a good sense of what need to do.

And do you sense that there's any customer reluctance because of the complexity of the wing or if customers become comfortable with it?

Raymond Conner

No. I think when you look at what the performance that these composite wings can bring, it's phenomenal. And you look at what the 87 is providing these people with respect to fuel burn and operating efficiencies, speed, all
these different things, I think they’re excited about this new wing. I mean, it’s amazing. It kind of blows everybody away with how good it is.

Q

Got it. Can we talk a little bit about the tanker situation last quarter? I think there’s a sense overall from everything we’re hearing today that look a lot of the core programs here are moving in the right direction.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

A

Q

On the other hand, an execution with anywhere sometimes gives investors pause.

Raymond Conner

Sure.

A

Q

How can we be confident that tanker isn’t sort of symbolic of other problems?

Raymond Conner

Well, I think tanker was complex in itself because of the nature of the [indiscernible] (25:06) to a certain extent. I think we’ve got to work our way through in any of the issues. Now, it’s just a matter of [ph] inner recovery (25:12) and moving forward and getting through functional tests. We’re right – we’re in the factory right now building the airplane and it’s going along.

Now, we’re just trying to hammering through all the things you got to do to prepare for flight. And that’s just a matter of getting – knocking those things out. I mean, there’s no real big technical glitch in that respect. I think it’s just a matter now of just putting in the working game through it.

Q

Got it. And there isn’t really any kind of read across from any execution issues there to the other programs because they’re separate?

Raymond Conner

A
No. Not at all. In fact, on the 767, we’ve been rolling out passenger airplanes or freighter airplanes, just, boom, really nicely. That’s been going on. So, it hasn’t bled over to anything else we’re doing.

Got it. We only have a few minutes left.

Raymond Conner

Sure.

I want to kind of have – ask a few broader questions about Boeing as a whole.

Raymond Conner

Sure.

When we think about the organization and the stock, I think capital returns to investors have been a very big theme going forward.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

We think about the cash flow production this year, the buyback that you guys announced last year, the dividend increase.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

How should we be thinking about cash flows going forward and capital returns to investors?
Raymond Conner

Well, I think we've changed our stance on any of that. I mean, we're going to continue to deploy our cash accordingly to both the investors and then into the new programs and those kinds of things, and we increased the dividend 50%, and I think that's – we'll continue to go down that path. We haven't changed any of our view on that.

Q

Got it. And M&A, has the view changed at all on M&A? How would you characterize the M&A environment today?

Raymond Conner

Yeah. We've done a lot of small things, and now it's about bringing all those things together, particularly on the services side, so we can give a great integrated offering to our customers. And that's a big focus for us is how do we effectively grow our services business where we actually are providing great value to our customers and providing them with a integrated solution that they can have on a number of different things. And that's what a lot of the M&A was about as we're moving forward.

So, I – but I think now it's about really putting down all that together so we can take it to the marketplace. I don't see big things on there, but you never know what's going to happen.

Q

Got it. I mean, is it possible that we do see some bolt-on deals going forward?

Raymond Conner

I wouldn't – I don't want to say yes or I don't want to say no. I just don't know. We'll see what comes up?

Q

Got it. Fair enough. I want to just circle back to some of your comments about the narrow bodies.

Raymond Conner

Yeah.

Q

When we talk about kind of moving to a rate of 52...
Raymond Conner

Yeah.

...a month, it's not entirely clear to the marketplace what the timing of that move might be. Is there anything that you can offer to elaborate on that?

Raymond Conner

Well, what we'd be looking at if – as we start – kind of our focus today would be around a 52-a-month rate in that somewhat net 2018 timeframe. Now, I can tell you that the demand is there for those airplanes, significant demand. And so I'm not uncomfortable with the timing or with the rate.

Okay. And what can you tell us about the pricing environment?

Raymond Conner

Well, it's competitive, but it's still reasonable.

Okay.

Raymond Conner

I mean, it's – but the market has always been competitive. And I think what we've demonstrated over the course of the last several years is our ability to continue to be highly productive and continue to offset any pricing pressure that we may see with great productivity and great efficiency to our production system, and we continue to focus on that. We're looking for ways all the time to lower our cost line so we can either increase the margins or be more competitive if we have to.

Our focus has been on continuous improvement, not only from the standpoint of our productivity and the things that we're doing to drive efficiency within our production system, but also with the airplane so we can continue to drive a value proposition to our customer that allows us to get a premium in the marketplace, which we still do today. And we're getting a premium for the MAX over the NG because it's a much better machine in that respect, and we continue to get a premium over our competitor because we have a better machine, too.
Unverified Participant

Got it. Well, on that point, Ray, we're out of time.

Raymond L. Conner

Okay.

Unverified Participant

Thanks a lot.

Raymond L. Conner

Yeah. Thank you.

Unverified Participant

Really appreciate it, and thanks, everybody, for attending.

Raymond L. Conner

Yeah. Thanks, everybody.