The Wings Beneath His Wind

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A flighty comment made by Continental Airlines CEO Gordon Bethune at an April aviation conference in Denver incensed AIDS advocates, forcing him to issue a formal apology. Bethune's not-so-winged words? The big cheese compared skyway-rival United Airlines-which has declared bankruptcy but vowed to regroup next year in a leaner, meaner mode-to being "HIV positive" and predicted that the company would soon do a nose dive, according to industry consultant Scott Hamilton. Led by AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), advocates wasted no time pointing out that "HIV positive" is not just a nice way of saying "dying," and Bethune dutifully mea-culpa'd. "A poor choice of words," he said, adding "while United has many good employees...its mismanagement makes the chances of its successful emergence from Chapter 11 questionable." United, which is APLA's "offline airline" and big benefactor, had no comment. Bethune would do well to drop the SARS-casm-and a few coins in some ASO cups.

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