

# For bringing PLUNA to the forefront of social media in Latin America, Raul Rodriguez is the SimpliFlying Hero for May 2011

Raul Rodriguez, Marketing Manager and GM for Europe at PLUNA, the official flag carrier of Uruguay, is our new SimpliFlying Hero for May 2011 for applying innovative strategies to improve PLUNA's brand and making it one of the leading airlines on social media in Latin America.

## Dipping the toes...

Raul's and PLUNA's journey through the social media space began a few years back when Raul approached the management at PLUNA with some ideas incorporating Twitter and Facebook. At that time, the management at PLUNA, a 75-year-old airline, had embarked on a strategic plan to change the company's model from a typical legacy airline to a more hybrid model. However, Raul's "crazy innovations" were faced with initial skepticism. Raul, in response, decided lead by example one day at a meeting with all the other managers at PLUNA:

*"I decided to project my twitter feed on the screen and I searched in Twitter for PLUNA, Live! 101 posts came up saying bad and good things about us. There was a conversation going on and we were not part of it."*

That demonstration, together with the assurance that no large initial investment would be required by entering the "conversation" on Twitter, proved a compelling argument in favor of greater active involvement by PLUNA in social media; and so began a campaign that started PLUNA's Facebook and Twitter pages, and later even brought in a Brazilian singer to boost the brand.

Indeed, as Raul explains, social media provided the perfect opportunity for PLUNA to explore new ways of contacting new groups of customers and thereby to improve their model. Avenues such as Twitter and Facebook were especially attractive as people from all over the world were (and still are) rapidly gravitating towards them, and also because of the unique two-way communication that they provide. Now PLUNA could cater changes in their services and operations according to what their customers wanted.



## The road to becoming the leading Latin American airline on social media

As a result of Raul efforts, PLUNA now has two full-time teams focused on social media. One is based in Brazil for PLUNA's Portuguese-speaking customer base, and another is based in Chile for PLUNA's Spanish speaking customers. There is a high level of integration, as both teams coordinate with the

---

## For bringing PLUNA to the forefront of social media in Latin America, Raul Rodriguez is the SimpliFlying Hero for May 2011

---

Sales and Marketing departments, and also with other managers, especially when a difficult customer query emerges that only the manager of that specific area can answer.

PLUNA's success in this field has by no means come easily. There have been mistakes and accomplishments in equal measure. For example, Raul once organized a contest over Twitter and Facebook in which a committee of experts chose the winners. The idea did not pan out well with PLUNA's customers, as they felt that the community itself should have been the judge.

Despite the challenges, Raul feels that he has gained much, most important of which has been the trust that he has fostered amongst his customers. He knows he has come a long way when he sees someone on PLUNA's Twitter or Facebook page defending the airline against vitriolic attacks from others.

### The runway ahead for PLUNA

Essentially, Raul believes that PLUNA, and any other airline diving into social media should be aware that by joining Twitter or Facebook, it is joining, rather than owning, a community of people whose suggestions and recommendations are a privilege rather than a right.

In the future, Raul sees the spread and influence of social media growing even more, which means that it will continue to be an important area that PLUNA will focus on. Raul believes that word-of-mouth recommendations are going to be the most important determinant of sales for PLUNA going forward, and social media provides a powerful way in which to take control of that process.

The SimpliFlying team congratulates Raul and his team for doing an inspiring job engaging customers

and driving business goals through social media for the airline.



Know someone who's worthy of being a SimpliFlying Hero?

*SimpliFlying Heroes* are individuals recognized for outstanding social media use in the world of aviation. Do you know of somebody who uses social media effectively in their airline or airport to achieve specific business results? Or do you think *you* fit the bill?

Then go ahead and fill up the [SimpliFlying Heroes nomination form](#). By filling out the nomination form, you bring them a step closer to being recognized by *SimpliFlying* for their efforts.

(Disclosure: PLUNA is a SimpliFlying client)

[+](#) Share / Save [↕](#)