

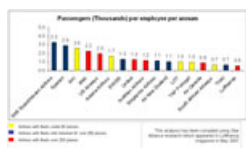
airlines employ relatively more educated staff than SAA do. Perhaps by employing more educated ground staff and administrative staff, SAA may be able to decrease the number of staff working at SAA and improve productivity. To supplement this strategy, SAA could also examine the extent to which staff are trained and multi-skilled.

Employees per plane:



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In terms of passengers served per employee, SAA's figure is also comparatively low. SAA serves more than 7 million passengers per annum, which is the second highest amount of passengers in its category of airlines with less than 60 aeroplanes.



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This year in March, SAA reported a R603 million operating loss. This followed a R485 million profit in the previous year. The loss has been attributed to the rising price of fuel as well as competition from low-cost airlines. Other airlines operating in similar environments will have gone through similar challenges, and SAA's seeming complacency means that perhaps they have been slow to come to terms with these challenges. To this end, it might serve SAA well to examine the recent return to profit of United Airlines following a similar slump in performance – who also pointed at fuel costs as a reason.

While fuel prices and low-cost airlines may very well be the only reasons for SAA's declining performance financially, perhaps after close examination of these numbers some solutions may appear for the local airline. However, it is worth considering whether SAA's performance would have been any better if they had cut back on staff earlier or if they had used up millions of rands making technology investments or offering more destinations. Solutions may appear obvious when examining differences in the operations of world class airlines, but getting SAA to this world class status may require an entire different approach based on the unique landscape in which it operates.

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