

## Customer Service - the Silver Lining

The truth is, regardless of all the potential mishaps that happen to those of us who fly to work with our clients around the planet, I'd still rather FLY than have to drive (or ride in) a car. Yet there are days, when even my resolve and my patience are 'tested'!

Recently I was flying home after doing a training session for a client. Just because of the distance involved, it promised to be pretty much an all day affair, from wake-up call to unpacking on the home front. And it all started so well too.

It was the end of a three-week journey that had me in three different states and five different cities. Needless to say, I was ready to go home. And unlike my usual procedure of NOT checking my luggage, I had indulged in retail therapy to the point, that I had to check my rollerboard. Actually, it had been so long since I actually checked luggage, that they had to physically show me what to do (unaccustomed as I am to travelling):-)

I had one scheduled stop relatively early in the journey. I spent the time in the Admiral's Club, drinking tea and checking email. Just as I was getting ready to go to the gate for the major leg of the trip, I received a message via my phone. My flight had been cancelled and they had rescheduled me. "Please see and agent if you have any questions."

I, along with several others, immediately went to the desk in the Admiral's Club. It was a mechanical problem and I had been re-routed and rescheduled, delaying my departure time for approximately another hour. "Not too bad," I thought.

When I got to the very congested gate area I found that the flight had been further delayed (10 minutes) - more mechanical difficulties. As time went on, the 10 minutes became 10 more minutes, then 10 more, then 10 more . . . well, you get the idea. Still not overly concerned I found a seat and began to read the requisite paperback typically used for in-flight reading. As time passed, the flight gate and terminal were changed, the gate more than once (this was the exercise portion of the journey). Further delays and a change of aircraft followed. After numerous delays, we finally boarded. By the time we landed, I had missed my connecting flight (Remember, much earlier after the first cancellation, my entire routing had been changed as well).

Fortunately, there was another flight out later in the evening. Having made several 'new best friends' through the various delays, we were mostly philosophical about the 'adventure' at this point, continuing to be glad all the 'mechanical issues' had happened while we were on the ground.

After a cumulative delay of just short of eight hours, I arrived home. You guessed it . . . my luggage did not. Taking only another hour or so, I was finishing up the paperwork and trying to explain the peculiarities of my physical address (the street stops and starts and if one doesn't understand that, it's easy to assume the address doesn't exist). Understanding that it is now 'tomorrow' and I'm not as 'cheerful' as I was earlier in the day, the woman at the baggage claim was not only calm, but very professional. As I was 'explaining' about the address, she said, "I know exactly where that is. I live close by and can explain it to the driver. In fact, if your luggage comes in tonight before I leave, I'll take it home with me and bring it by myself in the morning."

"Right!" I thought, as I finally left the airport.

Much to my surprise, she was on my doorstep the next morning, with my luggage in hand. A promise kept and such an amazing ending to a somewhat stressful day of travel, that it not only put it all in perspective, but left me with a feeling of "What a great airline!"

What little, discretionary things are happening in your organization that help your clients, customers, guests, or members to say, "What a great organization!"?

Oftentimes, it doesn't take much to turn a very negative situation around. Yes, I expected that the airline would deliver my luggage. I did not expect that particular agent to personally bring it by (on her way to taking her dog to the vet, no less). I didn't even expect her to make that kind of an offer. But she did, leaving me with a great customer experience and a renewed appreciation for those who pay attention to the 'little things' that make a 'big difference'.

Aloha