

## Motivated employees help businesses take flight

by Michael\_Kinsman

What happened to me when I was trying to fly home recently is no different than what happens to people every day.

My flight from Memphis, Tenn., to San Diego was cancelled at the last minute. The airline assured me that they could get me home by noon the next day, fully 15 hours after they had promised to do when I bought the ticket.

So I was no longer flying from Memphis to Dallas and then on to San Diego. They tried to book me a flight to Chicago, but those were all full. Then they thought they could get me to Dallas and onto to San Diego the next morning.

I had to get to work the next morning so I built my case and they kept looking. Then they found a flight that would take me to Minneapolis and then direct to San Diego. But that one was booked, too.

Finally, I got a flight to Los Angeles and took the last shuttle of the night to San Diego.

I was mentally and physically tired once I got to the airport gate for my flight. I watched the gate attendant, snapping boarding passes from the hands of passengers, snarling at them and making them ill at ease.

When I finally got to my seat, I noticed some commotion across the aisle.

A flight attendant was rudely ordering a woman off the plane. It seems that the airline itself had given her the wrong boarding pass, but they treated her like she was trying to pull a fast one.

I was kind of amazed that an innocent passenger would be treated like this.

Three hours later, I was stunned at the efficiency of a flight attendant on my short Los Angeles to San Diego flight.

The flight attendant cautioned us that because it was such a short flight, the airline typically offered only water to people who wanted it. But she said if we cooperated with her, we'd get full beverage service.

As soon as the airplane took off, she jumped into action, filling cup after cup with ice and then taking orders and filling them. When she had served everyone on the plane, the 23-minute flight was over.

She told me that it makes the trip go faster for her if she serves drinks. And, it certainly made her passengers happy.

I wondered about the difference between the two airlines I had just flown. One had angry employees and one had an employee willing to work harder just to make sure every customer felt better about their trip.

I also realized that the first airline is struggling to survive in a turbulent industry, while the second is doing very well even amid industrywide problems.

Tom Kochan, a management professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management, is something of an airline expert and he recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal that the best airlines are those that nurture good labor relations and urge employees to make decisions that are in the best interests of the airlines.

Kochan understands that the motivated employee who has the confidence of his employer will likely work harder to increase productivity and will make the airline more successful over the long haul.

Put this way, management seems simple. But for some reason, many managers never figure this out.

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