

FBO customer service model benefits everyone alike

By Gene Condreras
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As president of a nationally ranked New York Metro FBO, I would like to share my thoughts on customer service for customers of the demanding and unhappy variety.

First and foremost it is paramount that everyone within the service organization fully embraces the simple fact that happy customers are an integral component in the payroll delivery process. We are all employed by the customers we serve, and it's the money they spend with us that goes to pay our salaries.

With this in mind, it is our goal to apply this principle to all our customers and always let them know that their business is valued and appreciated. This is a plain and simple truth that is too often forgotten by large corporations in today's business marketplace.

Demanding customers stem from all walks of life. It is important to be a good listener in order to identify exactly what it is that's truly important to them. If you focus on providing to the best of your ability those things that are important to that customer, in 99% of cases you'll have a happy customer who will speak fondly of your service organization long after they've left.

It's the FBO's job to make the ground service experience as smooth and worry-free as possible for both the flightcrew and their customers. Since a flightcrew is accountable to their passengers for the overall service they receive, an FBO can either make that flightcrew look very good or very bad depending on the service they receive. Precise communication of flightcrew and passenger needs—both before and during a visit—is the key to receiving good service from an FBO. In this way, flightcrews can help us to help them.

When an aircraft shows up unannounced (which they often do), it places the FBO at a disadvantage. Prior notification affords the FBO the opportunity to make sure that ground transportation, rental cars, catering, hotel accommodations and everything else is in place for their customers' arrival. Most importantly, it allows them to ensure proper staffing for the amount of business scheduled to take place at their facility on a given day.

Communication from the line service technicians and customer service reps to FBO management is also a key component to providing good service. FBO facilities need to allow policy and procedures to evolve constantly in order to meet the demands of an

ever-changing market place. Remember the "happy customer golden rule" and adjust your service standards to meet their expectations as often as needed.

It's unfortunate, but unhappy customers are a fact of life no matter how hard we try to meet their service needs. We're all human—and, like it or not, we make mistakes from time to time.

Rule number 1 is to accept responsibility for our shortcomings. Unhappy customers don't want to hear an excuse or have the FBO attempt to convince them that their problem is a figment of their imagination. Accountability on the FBO's behalf paves the way to letting the customer know that they care, that they value their business and that they will do everything they can to learn from their mistake and prevent a future recurrence.

For example, just as flightcrews are responsible to their passengers for the FBOs they choose, FBOs are accountable for the vendors they've chosen for third-party services. Finger-pointing by the FBO will not assuage a customer's dissatisfaction when a problem occurs with a third-party vendor arranged for by the FBO. The FBO needs to choose wisely and follow up to make sure that the service they've arranged for satisfies their customers.

An FBO should do everything it can to correct an unhappy situation with a customer. An FBO's reputation for safety and service standards is paramount to its overall success. Word of mouth can make or break an FBO—and, let's face it, who gets around and shares their opinions with one another more than a flightcrew?

I wholeheartedly disagree with anyone who says that they don't place much stock in FBO surveys. An FBO survey is one of the most highly publicized forms of word of mouth available to a flightcrew.

An FBO's business is something that's earned each and every time a customer uses its facility and its services. Anyone who takes time out of their busy schedule to acknowledge a service organization for a job well done is in fact bestowing one of the highest honors available to that company.

And, of course, when it comes to national recognition, that's the icing on the cake. ✈



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