

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1244 Recipe: One Part Chaos and Four Parts Attitude

I'm sure you'll agree that traveling can be a bit chaotic. Traveling around Christmas may add to that chaos. Now, what if the people working for the airline have a bad attitude? Then, what if they make a decision that turns into, yeah, a certain measure of chaos? I'm Jerry Roberts, and I open up my travel journal to spill the unhappy beans, next on The Extra Point.

I caught a definition of chaos in the workplace yesterday, which called up a recent memory that I'll share today.

That definition of chaos read this way: *"Having no clear direction or plan of action. This leads to confusion, frustration, and decreased productivity."* I didn't see anything in there about bad attitude, but I figure it sure wouldn't make a situation any better.

My family and I are taking an evening flight to our next destination. The carrier is not one that operates in Guam, and we'd never been on one of their flights. Most airlines get a lot of complaints and their share of bad reviews, as did this carrier, so I figured it was nothing out of the ordinary. They offered the best available day and time, so I booked it.

The hotel at our destination — a small hotel — closed the front desk at midnight. If we weren't inside by then, we'd have to wake somebody up to open the door. I wanted to avoid that, so I walked to the gate agents to ask if the flight was on time. One smiled and said it was.

As I turned away, the other agent jumped out of her seat and barked, "Go back to your seat and wait!" I was a tad startled, yet said, "I was just asking a question." She barked again, "Everybody has questions. Going back to your seat and wait for announcements!" Okay, nice first impression. Good work.

The plane was full, about 180 seats, and when they attempted to board first class, people with small children, and their awards program members, that took about five minutes. Seeing

that, they pretty much dropped the rest of the boarding protocol and took everybody at one time. We then rode a tram to the plane, parked seemingly several zip codes away.

All 180 passengers are standing in the night air, waiting for another 10-15 minutes, when they made an announcement for everybody to board. This is when the chaos happened.

Rather than have rows 1-15 board at the front, and 16-30 use the back, their instruction had everyone mixed together. When we got onboard, as you might expect, people at the back had to get to the front, and people at the front had to get to the back. It took much longer than usual to overcome the gridlocked aisle and get everyone seated.

Besides the poor boarding decision, what also stood out to me was that the flight attendants paid no attention to passengers stepping into the plane. No hellos, no welcomes. They were talking to each other, or just looking away.

We got to our seats and got settled. I had my hand carry in the overhead bin, and had a flight attendant remove it to put someone else's in there, telling me to place mine in front of me for the flight. She didn't ask. She just did the swap.

It was a 3-hour, 45-minute flight and there was no meal service. No problem, we weren't hungry. However, they didn't even offer water. When I asked, they said they would sell me a small bottle for three bucks.

We all filed off the plane from the front, and the goodbye was much like the hello. No eye-contact, no "come back real soon."

In the aftermath of that flight, I learned quite a bit more about the airline. Apparently, what we experienced wasn't too far from their normal way of operating. It's hard to understand how a company seems to work so hard at treating customers in a negative manner. (Con't.)

Here's the thing, the boarding chaos would have been okay and written off as a mistake, had the service been decent and people had displayed a good attitude.

No needless hassle at the gate, especially when I had my answer and was walking away. A friendly smile, a kind word, asking if I would be okay with putting my bag in front of me so that someone else could have the spot in the overhead bin. A little eye-contact as we got on and got off would have been nice.

Attitude is everything. You may be the first, last, or only impression of your company that a customer will have. Make it count.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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