

Service management at british airways

Environment, Air



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Executive Summary

British Airways is amongst the world's largest airlines, and flies to about 94 destinations in the world. Service management in the airlines is something that is taken with very serious consideration in the company. The company

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has organized its aircraft transport services into the short haul, mid-haul and long haul. In these groups, the flight experience on offer ranges from a variety of services, from economy to first class flights. The company has designed its service delivery process to try and ensure quality is met in every aspect of the service delivery process. The service process entails provision of information on available flights to customers, provision of consultation services in case the customers encounter challenges during their interaction with the airline, order taking, hospitality, exceptional treatment provision and an understandable billing interface. The airline tries to ensure quality in the provision of its services, a mandate which is under the docket of the British Airways Quality Board, established by the company.

1. INTRODUCTION

Value is delivered to customers through the provision of quality services. In the provision of these services, it is ideal for organizations to ensure that they meet the customers' wants and needs to the maximum possible extent. Service management can thus be defined as a collection of targeted organizational capabilities aimed at improving and maximizing the service quality provided to customers, in order to facilitate the attainment of desired customer outcomes. The service management practice is supported by extensive skill, knowledge and experiences. Knowledge and skills can be obtained by attending the relevant classes or even reading relevant literature. However, experience is a very valuable aspect, and it is when organizations get practical exposure in the actual field and interact with customers that they get to realize the best ways to run their affairs so as to

ensure that their targeted customers get the outcomes they want. This also builds on the knowledge about service management. This report will aim at analyzing service management at the airline company, British Airways (Barrett , 2004, p. 36-39). The evaluation will be carried out by looking at specific facets in the company, namely the organization of the services they deliver, service design and the process of service delivery, quality of service, encounter of service, management of people, marketing of customer relationship, management of demand and capacity, service communications, performance measurement and monitoring and evaluating of the service (Lorenzoni & Lewis, 2004, p. 18).

1. DISCUSSION

Each of the areas to be looked at in examining the service management at British Airways is discussed below;

2. 1 Organization of the service

British Airways, established in the United Kingdom, is the largest airline in the country based on international flights, international destinations and fleet size. It operates in 94 countries worldwide, serving around 36 million people yearly (). The airline company has a head office at Harmondsworth, near London. This is where the company's main operations are controlled from. The main base of the airline is at London Heathrow airport, but it has a major presence in Gatwick airport as well. British Airways is licensed to transport passengers, mail and cargo on aircraft which has 20 or more seats (Nash & Nash, 2000, p. 106).

The company has organized its aircraft transport services into three sectors, namely the short haul, mid haul and long haul. The short haul entails aircraft transport domestically in the United Kingdom, and transport around Europe. The flights in this sector are also stratified further into economy class and business class. The economy class involves flight on an airbus, during which drinks and snacks are served, and vary depending on the time of the day and the duration of the flight. In the business class, customers are offered access to a specially designed lounge, known as the business lounge at terminal airports (Falconer, 2014, p. 189). The aircraft is narrow bodied, and the seats are of a larger configuration than the seats in the economy class. Blankets and pillows are usually available on flights that the airline considers long. Selected longer flights in this class also have an in-flight entertainment system. The mid-haul is for flights to selected regions on the outskirts of Europe. It is also stratified into a business class and economy class, whereby like the short haul, business class has more personalized and desirable services than the economy class. Lastly, there is the long haul transportation, which entails aircraft transportation around the world. The flight classes are also classified according to the personalization and desirability of services offered as well as the level of comfort experienced during the flight. The classes of flights here are the first class, business class, premium economy and the economy (Haksever & Render, 2013, p. 38).

2. 2 Design of services and service delivery process

British airways have a reputation of providing quality flight experience. A lot of effort has been put by the company and associated partners (support

vehicles, airport staff, etc.) in the delivery of supplementary services, while the flight itself has quite a small part in the service delivery process (Perret, 20007, p. 85). Before the flight, the airline advertises effectively so that customers can differentiate British Airways flights from flights from other companies. Customers can then book for flights through the internet or through a travel agent. The company also has a call center, whereby customers can enquire on issues in case they have a problem while booking for a flight. The company ensures that the customer service is well informed about the company and the services they offer, as they have trained them well on how to react to certain given situations. The company also provides some hospitality to customers in case of flight delays. British Airlines gives vouchers to their customers, through which they can buy refreshments of their choice as they wait for the flights to arrive. If the delays are long, the airline provides accommodation to the customers in hotels near the airports.

The airline company also takes into account that there may be customers who have to be given exceptional treatment from the rest. This may include the physically handicapped, vegetarians and the elderly people. Provisions have been put in place to ensure that this people are accorded proper, quality services that are in order with their respective situations (CTI Reviews, 2016, p. 46). In billing, British Airlines includes all its extra-flight services like entertainment and food in one price ticket, as opposed to separate tickets for separate tickets for the separate sets of services.

Payment for the services is done during the reservation for the given flights through a credit card, or via a cheque or cash if the booking is done through an agency. The airline also has restrictions when it comes to luggage, and

customers may be charged further when the luggage a customer has exceeds the luggage limit. During the flight, the customers have the option of purchasing certain foods and drinks which are not included in their meal plan. They can also purchase duty free products available in the airline. Customers can pay with different currencies, as well as with credit cards.

2.3 Service quality

British Airways has a Service Delivery department, which is responsible for the setting of service standards, and consistent delivery of these standards, especially on areas that are directly linked to the customer. These areas include the check in, catering, cabin service and baggage delivery (Kandampully, 2002). The attainment of these standards is ensured through extensive training and motivating of staff. The company recruits young staff to be in the cabin crew, so that they can create a warm and friendly atmosphere in the aircraft, whereby the customer feels that their treatment is being personalized, and they are treated as individuals, rather than part of a routine practice. The older staff was recruited for their management and leadership skills (Neely & Najjar, 2006, p. 112). The training of the young cabin crew is focused on the “ peoples” aspect, rather than just training them on routine practice. This enhances quality in the delivery of their services. The staff is usually encouraged to be keen on recognizing the tangible opportunities in which they can improve the service quality that is offered ().

The airline company however has experienced a few hiccups in its service delivery over time. There have been cases of misplaced baggage, missed

connections, late flights and long queues. The company strives to ensure that it learns from these unfortunate occurrences, and put in measures to ensure that repeated occurrences of these events is limited as much as possible. British Airways has also established a board, the British Airways Quality Board, which tries to ensure that all the quality initiatives in the provision of services are brought together, thus viewed and handled as a single entity (Turnbull, 2006, p. 335). This ensures that the top management provides the lead in ensuring everyone shares the responsibility in the upholding of quality. This shows the desire of the company in ensuring that quality runs from the very top management in the company to the bottom staff in the hierarchy. The directors are responsible for the leadership of the board.