

Personal Signatures

This is a story about the kind of employee we all wish we had....Denny Flanagan, a Captain with United Airlines.

Close your eyes for a moment. Imagine you are seated in the lounge, waiting for your United flight to depart an hour from now. You hear this voice over the PA system....”Ladies and Gentlemen, passengers on United Flight 831 to San Francisco....this is Captain Denny Flanagan, your pilot on Flight 831. The time posted for our take-off is a little optimistic. The board says 8:20, but the aircraft we will be using won’t arrive for about another 20 minutes, and I don’t think we’ll be able to depart until about 9:15. I’ll stay around the lounge, and give you further updates as I can get them. Thanks for flying United.”

That kind of service is not all that Captain Flanagan does. He mingles with passengers in the gate area, he will frequently walk down the aisle, introducing himself to passengers during the flight. He’ll hand out cards with information about the aircraft. On every flight, he signs two of the cards on the back and, if there is wine left over from first class, he announces that passengers with his signature have won bottles of wine..

When the movie ends, flight attendants pass out napkins and passenger are invited to write notes and their experiences on United – good or bad. Several are selected to receive a coupon for a 10% discount on a future United flight.. Flanagan take the customer feedback with him, and posts the notes in crew rooms or sends them on to airport managers when they raise specific issues.

When unaccompanied children are on his flights, Captain Flanagan personally calls parents on his cellphone with reassuring updates. He writes notes to first-class passengers on the back of his business card, addressing them by name and thanking them for their business. He takes pictures of pets traveling in cargo compartments with his cellphone camera, then shows owners on the flight that their animals are on board.

One time, during an extended delay, Captain Flanagan had a local McDonalds deliver 200 hamburgers to his hungry passengers.

His efforts would stand out in any industry, but are even more remarkable in today’s frustration-filled air-travel world.

Captain Flanagan signs every one of his flights with his **personal signature**. He is aware. He cares. He looks at the situations through his passengers' eyes, and then GOES OUT OF HIS WAY TO MAKE FLYING MORE FUN AND/OR MORE BEARABLE and even ENJOYABLE for his passengers.

When he was asked why he does this, Captain Flanagan said, "My customers deserve a good travel experience. I just treat everyone like it's the first flight they've ever flown."

His actions easily create powerful word-of-mouth during and after his United flights.

Over the top, you say.....Impossible for me to do in my job.....Not practical in my job....

I disagree....each of us has the same opportunity that Captain Flanagan has....to look at our jobs and the situations we are in through our customers eyes, ears, and experiences.....and to think of small, caring things we can do that our customers would appreciate. Customers will notice these small things, more than we realize...and they will make a huge difference in both the customer experience, and in the satisfaction you get from your job.

(555 words)



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