



Stanford eCorner

Defining the JetBlue Experience

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We spent 4.5 years defining the customer experience, and we tried to put our money into things that mattered to people. Food is one example: I have never heard a single soul say that they haven't had a good meal, and so they'll book an airline ticket. This year, we'll serve 10 million customers. If we'd spent \$5 on a meal for each customer, we'd have spent \$50 million of food that wasn't appreciated. So we use humor to inform people that there won't be full meals, and we provide snacks at 17 cents apiece. We knew that televisions would be memorable. I remember one of the happiest days when we were starting JetBlue was when we found the company who installs direct TVs in planes. I wanted to give people control on an airplane. The cost of implementing the televisions was a fraction of the cost of serving full meals. Cleaning the airline was another example. And helping customers put bags away, to improve the gateway time.



Transcript

What we tried to do, as we took this four and a half years to think about the customer experience on JetBlue, we tried to put our money into things that really mattered to people. For example, food. I've never heard a single soul say, "You know, I haven't had a good meal lately. I think I'll go book an airline ticket." And all you do is get grief about your food on Letterman or on Jay Leno, so it's all about it. So we thought, 'Hey, we're not going to even serve food. If they don't appreciate it, we're not going to serve it.' And this year we'll serve about 10 million customers. And if we had just tried to spend \$5 per customer on food, they wouldn't have appreciated it, a), and it would have cost us \$50 million. So we said, "Forget it." And we tried to make fun of it by coming up with a chicken saying, "Chickens were meant to fly." And then at the gates we say, "Next food, 2500 miles." And we encouraged people to bring food on the airplane. We have snacks. You won't starve to death on JetBlue.

Cheese and crackers and blue chips and all kinds of things. And when I'm serving snacks it's like, all-you-can-eat and shareholders get three, so take all what you want. But we tried to do that. But those are 17 cents apiece or 12 cents apiece to serve that kind of stuff and you can eat all you want to. But we knew TVs would be memorable. And so I remember, one of the happiest days in the early days of JetBlue I found this company that provided this service. And I said, "Bingo, man, that's exactly what I'm looking for," is making sure that we have the ability for people to have some sort of control on an airplane because they don't have it today. And so I just thought that was going to be the greatest thing ever, to have live television on board. And we have a long ways to go in that area, too. We're increasing the number of channels.

We're going to have movies on the video server that we're putting on. We're going to do all kinds of things in that area. But it was really, really important. And people get off talking about that. And the cost was a fraction of what the food were to cost. So it's just putting money in the right places that really matter to people. And so that was really, really important to us. And then it was funny because we said to the flight attendants, "Look, we need to get these people off the airplane and on the airplane as soon as we can." So the flight attendants cleaned the airplane. And I helped them clean the airplane. The pilots came back and they cleaned the airplane.

We all cleaned it together. But then when they're coming on, we have these things in the aisle called 'spinners'. These are people that spin. And they look and they look and they don't realize there's 150 people standing behind them. It's kind of, like, "Hello?" You know, you've got the whole plane and we've got 35 minutes to turn this airplane around. So just kind of get rid of spinners by telling them you'll take care of their bags and put in their bags up for them. You say, "Just take your seat, I'll take care of your bag for you." Well, that became, like, "Wow, I can't believe I flew on you and you put my bags away." I said, "You're a spinner, aren't you?" "No." And so our people are in the aisles actively helping people put their stuff away. And that now has become a hallmark at JetBlue. There are a lot of different reasons why people like JetBlue. Some like the TVs.

Some say, "I never watch TV but I like the fact that people help me with my bags," that "Your planes are new," that "Your seats are leather." Everyone has a different thing, but altogether comes together with what our customers call 'The JetBlue Experience'. It is a different kind of flying experience.