

SAS 'Flying Low' on Customer Experience

Well, where do I start?

It's the 9th of November at about 10.20, London City Airport SAS check in desk. You can only check in 2 hours before so I thought they were joking when they said the check in was closed, as I was actually just over an hour before the flight. After showing my E booking print out, he said "we don't have a flight out this morning for flight number SK512" and proceeded to close the check in and disappear, pointing me in the direction of the information desk.

The information desk was unmanned and no contact numbers displayed or information relating to the flight (s). I called 118 118 to obtain the SAS number. The number they gave me accessed reservations after an interminable wait and selections. The operator told me I had the wrong number and I needed to call another number 02089907060. Surprise, surprise this routed me through to exactly the same place. After a second explanation of where I was and why I was calling, the operator told me the flight had been cancelled and I had been booked onto the 9.55 out of Heathrow!!! She didn't even see the idiocy of this situation when explaining it, which makes it worse.

At this stage it occurred to me that SAS had instigated a new passenger requirement ~ telepathy. No one had bothered to inform me of either change!! No apologies, empathy, no nothing.
Still no one at the desk and 10 minutes has elapsed.

I call again and get through to an older gentleman, who sounds quite surprised to be on the end of the phone. He transferred me ~ guess where? Yes, back to reservations. I am more than a little annoyed by now, as you can imagine. I finally get to speak to an operator who after asking the same questions as everyone else and listened to the problem, promptly cut me off.

So far the experience with SAS has been disastrous, more governmental than commercial.
Still no one at the desk 15 minutes has elapsed.

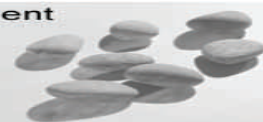
I call again and get through to the same older gentleman who appears quite confused and merely offers 'oh dear' to the issue of an operator cutting me off. A little wiser, but angrier I obtain the names of the operators. Having asked for a manager or supervisor I get an operator! She starts by telling me my flight has been cancelled ~ I pointed out that I now knew that and wanted to know what they were going to do about it. I was offered an alternative flight out of Heathrow at 14.05. Pointing out that I was standing in London City Airport and SAS had cancelled the flight, how would I get to Heathrow.

20 minutes time has elapsed and still no one at the desk

She didn't know how SAS policy worked in this situation, so I suggested that SAS could organise a taxi. Once again she was unsure and we descended into a long debate about the probability of getting a re-fund and how it would work. I have been in this situation before and waited months for a refund after many letters and phone calls.

I would need to speak to customer relations. So, I ask to be put through to customer relations. She explained I would need to dial a different number and they only work 9-10, 12-14 and 16-17.30. She goes into another monologue about being a different department.

At this stage I don't care, I just need to speak to someone, which understands what is going on and has the ability to fix it.



One again a more governmental and bureaucratic approach than commercial.

In the end I ask her to book me onto the 14.05 out of Heathrow. Finally a supervisor comes onto the line to deliver another governmental style monologue. They can't definitively tell me that if I take a cab they will cover the cost.

30 minutes has elapsed and the desk is finally manned.

A car is organised by the representative.

Still no apology or attempt to rescue the experience.

On arrival at Heathrow my E ticket doesn't work and guess what crosses my mind? You haven't actioned the new reservation, that's because I have lost trust in your organisation. The check in girl asked to see my e mail confirmation and must have known what had happened, but not a word. She issued a boarding card and baggage tag, and then asked me to wait as she went off to speak to her supervisor. On returning she ripped them up and told me to go over to the ticket desk. You can now imagine what I thought of your organisation. She didn't attempt to sort it out or take responsibility; I was just another body to process or get rid of.

The only person within the whole experience that displayed anything close to customer service and tried to positively intervene was the supervisor on the ticket desk. What did she do? Apologise and upgrade me.

Fundamentally I am disappointed that such a great brand has fallen so far! It appears as if the staff have lost their passion and customer orientation. The SAS culture and competitive difference is missing or looking very tired. You are quick to communicate, regarding developments at SAS and constantly raise expectations about the services you offer, but failing to deliver them as experiences at customer level.

Why didn't someone have the intelligence to leave a sign on 'check in' explaining what had happened and provide a number to call or course of action?

To add insult to injury, I live in Teddington (20 minutes from Heathrow) I had to travel right across London to get to London City Airport and then come right back past my door to get to Heathrow. The flight was then an hour delayed.

Hey! Not bad a whole day for a one and a half hour flight.

