

How a Singapore Airlines Steward Redefined Service Excellence



Source: Pexels (2022)

Background

A Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight steward, Maverick Lim, received a Service Excellence Award for his exceptional assistance to an elderly German passenger traveling alone (The Straits Times, 2024). Mr. Lim, the only German-speaking crew member on a flight from Auckland to Singapore, was asked to help an elderly German passenger whose connecting flight had been cancelled due to a planned strike at Frankfurt Airport (The Straits Times, 2024). The elderly man, who was in his 70s or 80s, appeared helpless and lost as he was traveling for the first time in five years following his late wife's passing and hardly spoke any English (The Straits Times, 2024).

Going beyond his call of duty, Lim carried the elderly man's bags, took him to his hotel, and helped him rebook a new flight to Frankfurt. The next morning, Lim returned from his home to help the man check out of the hotel before accompanying him to the airport. There, Lim not only asked the ground crew to assist the passenger to his boarding gate, but also informed cabin crew members on the flight that the man would require help from ground staff at Frankfurt Airport (The Straits Times, 2024). At the same time, Lim contacted the elderly man's daughter in New Zealand and gave her updates via WhatsApp. The airline was later informed about Lim's act of kindness following a report from his colleague on board the flight from Auckland. According to Lim, he was relieved to hear from the daughter that her father had arrived safely, and said that it just felt right at the moment to help a person who was going through tough times (The Straits Times, 2024).

SIA is well-recognized for its excellent service. It is believed that a strong investment in front-line employees' training and empowerment is the key to unlocking service excellence (EHL Insights, 2020). Of those applying for a crew position, only 10% who demonstrate both expertise and a caring attitude are selected (EHL Insights, 2020). At the same time, SIA dedicates 40% of its resources to training, highlighting its commitment to maintaining high service standards and adapting to changing customer needs (EHL Insights, 2020).

Discussion Questions

1. How does act of kindness from staff like Maverick Lim impacts customer satisfaction and brand reputation?
2. Apart from Service Excellence Award, what else can airlines offer to reward staff for performing good deeds?
3. What strategies can airlines adopt to encourage their staff to take the extra mile?
4. How does training and selection process contribute to Singapore Airlines' service excellence?

References

EHL Insights. (2020). Taking Off: Service Excellence at Singapore Airlines. Retrieved from <https://hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu/service-excellence-singapore-airlines>

Pexels. (2022). Airplane in the Sky. Retrieved from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/airplane-in-the-sky-11979030/>

The Straits Times. (2024). SIA steward who helped elderly passenger travelling alone wins service excellence award. Retrieved from <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/sia-steward-who-helped-elderly-passenger-travelling-alone-wins-service-excellence-award>

Keywords

- Airline
- Service Excellence
- Customer Satisfaction
- Empowerment
- Training
- Brand Image