

Communications

An Individual's Knowledge

by R. H. REED
Director — Cargo Services

I couldn't possibly single out one subject or phase of air cargo that is the most important. However, it did occur to me that there is one element of our one and three quarter million dollar air cargo service that does have a definite bearing on the ultimate goal which we are endeavoring to attain. This element can be applied not only to air cargo but to any phase of our operation.

First, in defining our goal I see it as follows — to produce an outstanding product efficiently — market it wisely — with the end result of making every customer a satisfied customer. Not to mention the area of economics wherein the maximum return on each dollar invested is a definite consideration.

The Basic Problem

Just what is this element that affects our product, our marketing techniques, our customer service, our economic well being as well as the motivation of our personnel? Regardless of how you analyze any of the problems that have a direct bearing on the production of our product, or no matter how you approach the solution to any problem, when the disguising waters of excuse have evaporated, the residue remaining is "communication."

How could we possibly operate without communication systems — the telephone, teletypes, long-lines, jet-lines, radios, even memoranda? We couldn't. It would be impossible. This, however, is not the type of communication system to which I am referring.

Webster defines communication as "to impart, pass along, transmit, to make known; and further to give or give and receive information or messages in any way; as by talk, gestures, writing, etc." Communication, for my purpose, is more technically defined as "a process for conducting the attention of another person for the purpose of replicating memories" or more specifically to teach. Recently I read that today's leader of men recognizes that communication is probably his most important responsibility. He knows that his leadership takes effect through the process of communication. If there is no communication, there is no leadership. Because the leader interacts with others by communicating with them. Communication is not an end itself but is the process by which ends are accomplished.

Customer Example

A few weeks ago, a customer called me quite concerned that we were not carrying cargo on the 727. This, of course, was obviously incorrect.

The customer had been at the airport a few days prior to calling me and was talking to an agent about the new jet aircraft. This agent told the customer about a memorandum received from my office to the effect that we would not accept cargo on the 727. This, however, was not what the memorandum said. The memorandum said that we would not solicit cargo for the 727 or divert cargo from other flights to 727 flights but if cargo was available at the time the 727 operated, we would certainly want to accommodate it as we do on any other flight.

What happened here was a breakdown in communications. Where? It's really difficult to

say. Maybe the agent didn't read the memorandum thoroughly and misinterpreted its meaning, or he overheard the other agents talking about the subject and only got part of the conversation.

Nevertheless, somewhere during the flow of this information from management to memorandum, to the bulletin board, to the agent and ultimately to the customer, something caused the communication network to go haywire.

Regardless of what we may think of ourselves, each of us has within us a vast storehouse of information and knowledge concerning our product and how it should be marketed. The only way for the company to benefit from this great natural resource is for you to communicate and to teach. The only

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Qualified Personnel

by BILL WOOTEN
Station Manager — FAY

If asked "What is the number one problem of the airline today?" I would have to answer the problem of qualified personnel.

Anyway you slice it, unqualified personnel are expensive. When we analyze all of our problems on any given day in the stations a vast majority of the time we come up with the inevitable answer: unqualified personnel. Unqualified for what reason? New personnel, incapable personnel, poorly trained personnel, or improper attitude (don't care personnel)?

Who Is Responsible

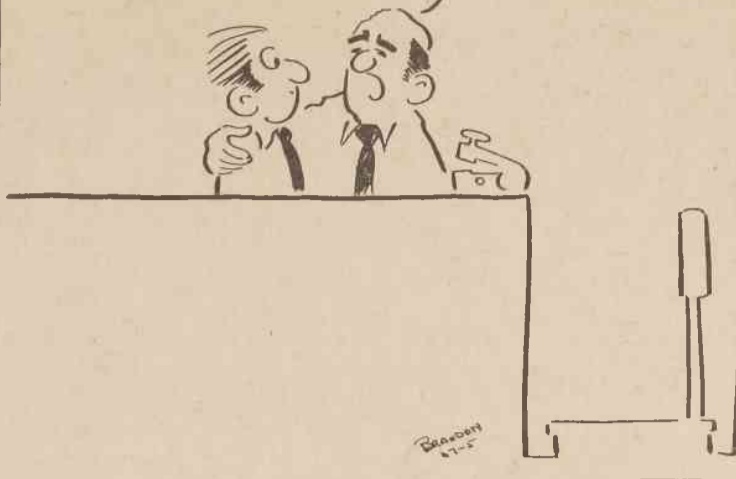
Who is responsible for keeping our stations staffed with qualified personnel? The responsibility must be shared by both top management (from station level up) and within the stations (managers and supervisors). Neither one can rightfully point the finger at the other and say "the responsibility is all yours." Within the station, the manager must assume the responsibility for hiring. Too often we hire people without proper screening and lower our standards just to get someone on the payroll. Too often the pressure is on the manager to fill a vacancy because we are told that if we got by this long with the vacancy, we don't need to fill it or get the vacancy filled or the station complement will be cut. I haven't heard of any station that felt that they were overstaffed and could afford a cut in complement. As a result the hiring standards are lowered and the first applicant for the job is hired whether he is qualified or not. In many cases they have to be terminated after three or six months or they are kept on the payroll as borderline or incapable agents because the manager feels that he cannot afford to go through the process of creating a vacancy, finding and screening a new applicant and training a new agent.

Staffing

The manager and his supervisors must assume the responsibility for developing and maintaining an adequate training program within the station. Too often new personnel, after a few days on the job, are left to perform jobs or to man positions with no training or with the sketchiest of instructions on how to do it. The day of the

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NOW SINCE THIS IS YOUR FIRST DAY... WHEN A CUSTOMER APPROACHES THE COUNTER... SMILE... BID HIM GOOD DAY... AND THEN FAKE IT !!!



Uniform Check-In; Central Reservations Suggested For ORF'S Problems

by WALLACE KERR
Station Manager — ORF

The days are over when we would sit at an outlying station until the wee hours of the morning waiting for a DC-3 to come through with two or three passengers, two bags, two or three pouches of airmail off, one pouch on. After many lonesome hours of waiting, the flight has worked and gone in three minutes at the most.

Time has changed rapidly in the past few years; as all of you know, because everyone here has been a part of this growth.

We are moving at a much greater pace than in the "old days," however, we have one area that is getting a head start on the company. If we do not start putting forth more efforts now and concentrating on this area, we are asking for more problems, and least to say, fewer customers. Gentlemen, the area I am speaking of is complaints. I will endeavor to bring some of the complaints to you as far as the Norfolk station is concerned.

The reservations system and telephones, the long line and FX lines are a tremendous help. Consolidated or a central reservations office would give the Norfolk station more time to give the service that the passenger has bought. For example, during the time flights are on the ground, there is usually only one agent available to answer phones. Many people "shop" so to speak, after the evening meal for vacations, business trips, and tourist information. This is the time that our station works six flights in a period from 1730 until 1912. This includes terminating, originating and through flights.

Central RES

With reservations at a central point, the counter agents would not have to continually run back and forth to reservations checking flights or trying to answer a ringing phone while the passenger on the counter waits. The main reason I think central reservations would be beneficial to Norfolk is that it would enable us to give the ticket counter full coverage, which, in turn, would give our passengers better and more reliable service.

The agents working the ramp and operations could give the freight customers better service if they did not have to come into reservations as soon as they get a flight out. Baggage carts for the flights could be loaded without as much haste and this would enable loading to be more accurate. This would eliminate the complaints about not answering the phones at peak periods. These are a few of the many advantages central reservations would offer in my station.

The ticket counter procedures

are different in many stations; for example, DCA has gate check-in, Norfolk has ticket counter check-in. A passenger rides out of DCA to ORF and perhaps this is his first trip on Piedmont. He left DCA and went to the gate to have his ticket pulled before boarding for ORF. When he returned to the airport to board for DCA, he doesn't check the counter so we can pull his ticket and give him a boarding envelope. He tries to board the aircraft and has to be sent back inside to the counter. This can be quite distressing and confusing to the passenger. With gate check-in or ticket counter check-in, it is my opinion that we could have a ticket position for passengers with tickets and one for those without and thus be uniform throughout the system. This would reduce some of the confusion and complaints of passengers having to stand in line when they purchased their tickets by mail, at a CTO or JAMTO.

MSB Problems

MSB passengers are a big item at the ORF station. We have one problem here that is causing complaints from downline stations as well as in ORF. The form DD 1580 is spelled out in the traffic manual to the letter; we all know what to do with it. The problem is the Navy, Marines and Army in ORF do not have a supply of these forms. Since this form has been in effect, I have not handled over twelve. They just do not have an ample supply. We have had complaints from passengers that have been pulled and from their department heads as well. The agents are doing their best by using the old desiring procedure, but this does not work as well as if they have the DD 1580. The downline stations pull them after they were told in ORF the flight was filled out of a certain station. Then there is a misunderstanding as to the conditions of the MSB procedures and there is another complaint.

Several complaints have been made recently by regular passengers as to the appearance of our equipment. I realize that in the period of three or four days, the same aircraft will fly over the coal mining country and will pick up much dirt and grime.

Planes' Appearance Reflects On Piedmont's Image

by DON EDMUNDSON

District Sales Manager — ATL

I would like to talk with you about "image," not our corporate image as we are seen by our contemporaries with regard to load factors, on time performance, revenue passenger miles, available seat miles, and so forth, for in these we are indisputably a leader in the various facets of airline operation.

The "image" I am referring to is one used in the context of sales, marketing and merchandising. It is also referred to as "product packaging" or just "packaging."

Have you ever stopped to think about how many millions of dollars are spent annually on this one little item of "product packaging" by industries today? More than you and I can conceive. And why?? It's simple. To influence the prospective customer to buy one product over another. One example is a number of years ago, the Ford Motor Company came out with a product they called "Edsel." They touted this car in their advertising to be the greatest automobile marvel since the "Model T." It had, according to them, everything anyone could want in an automobile in that price range. Through their advertising, and mind you, this was all prior to the product being on the show-room floor, they had the consumer ready to buy. But what happened? The "Edsel" didn't sell, and had to be discontinued, as a product in the Ford line, at a dead loss of millions of dollars. Mr. Henry Ford, when questioned as to why the "Edsel" didn't sell, answered in part, "It did not appeal to the public in design. Mechanically and structurally it was as good as any product Ford has ever built."

By now you are probably asking yourself, what does all this have to do with Piedmont and our reason for this general

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I was recently on a flight from RMT to ORF and during take-off, noticed dust reflected by the sun coming from the curtains. When the aircraft vibrated, dust flew from all directions. Since we have put on the jet and 227 service, it seems that our regular passengers are noticing more and more how dirty the Martin's are.

I know that from past experience it is impossible to clean the outside of the aircraft in the winter months in a cold climate unless they can be brought inside. However, the inside of the aircraft can be cleaned each night. The carpets on many of the Martins have dirt packed into them to the point that they are badly discolored. In many cases, the carpet has seams exposed or there is black tape covering the seams. This is especially dangerous for ladies wearing high heels.

A passenger boarding a flight where the engines are high on time or even one due in for an overhaul is not aware of anything but the appearance of the aircraft. Water, soap, and paint can do wonders to the outside of the aircraft but if all the insides are not cleaned, then we have another complaint.

A little more effort, each day, by all of us in these areas, would reduce the complaints. In other words, Gentlemen, if we all go back home and clean up our own back yards we will have a better and more progressive product.