

# Marketing 'Chex' a success in kid's cereal promotion

The success of a well-executed sales promotion is often expressed in terms of exposure gained, return on investment or bottom line figures. But the success of Piedmont's recent "Kids Fly Free" promotion should also be measured by the numerous complimentary letters we received from passengers who took advantage of the special offer.

Soon after this joint offer with Ralston Purina Company for complimentary tickets began appearing on more than 31 million specially marked boxes of Ralston Cereals, families began taking off on long-awaited vacations. And within weeks, letters of appreciation from all around the country began flowing into Piedmont's sales promotions department. They were still receiving "thanks" two weeks after the program ended.

"By making dream vacations more affordable, several thousand families are now very happy and very likely to fly Piedmont again in the future," said Bill Asher, director-sales promotions. "If the basis of a promotion is to generate satisfied customers and more business, we did it."

"Kids Fly Free" was a promotion that gave kids the opportunity to fly at virtually no cost on Piedmont Airlines by redeeming proof-of-purchase seals from any Chex brand cereal boxes. Children two through 17 were eligible for the free flight certificates and the purchase of one adult-fare ticket per child was required. With the exception of some holiday blackout dates, travel had to be completed between September 9, 1987 and February 15, 1988.

"By tying in the required purchase of one

adult-fare ticket per eligible child, we have exposed Piedmont's brand of service to people who might otherwise have taken their business to another carrier, or not traveled at all," Asher said. "Instead, we've converted many of these people into Piedmont customers."

A mother of two children in Sunbury, PA, put it best. For quite some time she and her husband had considered a family trip to Disney World, but, she said it seemed flying would be too expensive and out of the question.

"Then we ran into your offer with Chex cereals. I couldn't believe it was true, but it really did cost the four of us just \$400 instead of \$800. . . I'm looking forward to flying on Piedmont again in the future. Thank you Piedmont."

Several letters complimented Piedmont's punctual service, friendly crews and helpful station people. For many kids, and their parents, it was not only their first Piedmont flight, but their first flight ever. Seven-year-old "Rachel" of Hollywood, FL, was as pleased with her

plastic pin-on captain's wings as she was with her free ticket to Grandma's house, and thanked Piedmont dearly for both.

"But the common link between the hundreds of letters Piedmont received was that this offer allowed them to really go big on a vacation—to travel by air, together as a family, somewhere they might otherwise never have been able to go," Asher said. "From what we read in their letters, they were very grateful for this opportunity."



**The following excerpts from complimentary letters received from all around the country tell just how popular and successful the Piedmont/Ralston "Kids Fly Free" program has been:**

*We had never traveled with your airline before and did so because of the "Kids Fly Free" promotion. Due to the service and attitude of your employees, we will definitely make Piedmont our first choice for air travel in the future.*

Chicago, IL

*My children were able to visit their grandmother and Disney World due to your kindness. This would not have been possible without you. . . Thank you for making a dream come true. . .*

Wabash, IN

*Having flown two other airlines this year we expected delays and waits in airports. With two young children this was not something that we were looking forward to. To our delight, the flights were on time, the planes were clean and well maintained and the crews were helpful and friendly. . . Thank you for a positive flying experience. In the future we will fly Piedmont whenever possible and will recommend your company highly.*

Cincinnati, OH

*None of us had ever flown on Piedmont before, and we were extremely pleased with the service and personnel of your airline. Everyone we came into contact with was very courteous, helpful and pleasant. We were also pleased with the quality of the food. . . Thanks again for making this offer available to us. We never would have been able to afford to fly had it not been for this promotion. . .*

Dublin, PA

*In the past, to fly by air had been a financial impossibility as we are family of eight. Yet last summer during a family forum, we all agreed to forego birthday and Christmas gifts this year that we might purchase air travel to Florida to visit my brother. It was with the help of this program that we were able to accomplish purchasing tickets. . . Your organization reflects a caring company. We wish to encourage you in your efforts for excellence in service to the American family.*

Springville, NY

*Thanks so much for our vacation come true. . . we were able to make an unprecedented trip to Florida and we would be interested in knowing of any similar promotions next year as this is the only way we would be able to visit the East coast. . .*

Hollister, CA

## New building adds growing room at Madison Park

Piedmont's reservations computer center at Madison Park has a new neighbor, a three story, state-of-the-art building which will provide the center with much-needed room for growth—and room for the expansion of computer hardware and staff which will eventually support the combined USAir Group reservation and information systems.

The new 86,013-square-foot addition, completed in late January, is immediately adjacent and attached to the present computer reservations center, with access between the two structures on all three floors. According to Gary Linville, administrator of building maintenance, aside from some pending interior work, the facility is technically ready for occupancy.

The first and second floor have been designed with raised floors to house CAREsystem hardware and other information and communications systems, Linville said. And on the third floor, a 1,800 square foot section is currently being outfitted with six managers' offices, one director's office, a conference room and 150 cubicles for programmers. This new area is scheduled for completion by mid-April.

Total square footage at our computer complex now exceeds 167,000 square feet. In addition, a six-story, 1,600-car parking deck for employees opened last August.

"This place has been a boom town," Linville said. "We've been going nonstop since the center initially opened in 1985." Assisting David Reed, manager of building maintenance, Linville is Piedmont's in-house maintenance specialist, overseeing all functions of the construction of the facility and its infrastructure.

But the job doesn't stop there. Linville shares the responsibility of insuring that all building systems are in top shape and remain operational 24-hours a day, year round.

"A momentary shut down would have an im-

mensely adverse effect throughout the entire company, from reservations to the vital communications activities of the AOCC," he said.

"That's why it is imperative that all power and cooling systems at both buildings have an adequate emergency back up in the event of a mechanical or power failure.

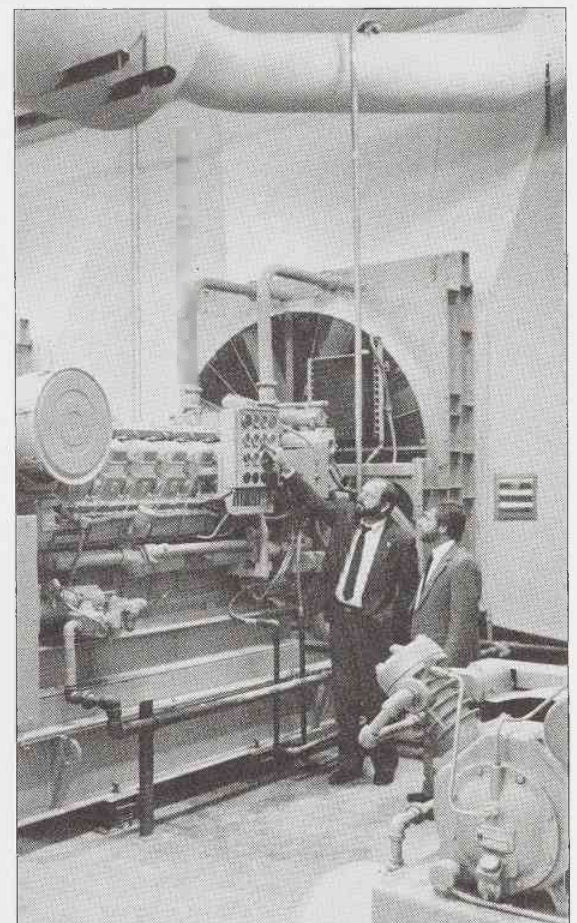
"Providing redundant systems to a building with such heavy power demands is step one in designing, maintaining and protecting our millions of dollars in computer hardware," Linville said.

For nearly every air conditioning unit, emergency generator, water chiller and UPS (uninterruptible power supply) in the new building, there is one of equal size and power at its side. And each of these units is of phenomenal proportions. Imagine three 1,500 kilowatt generators, producing 2,200 horsepower each—more electrical power than is generated by a diesel locomotive—or picture two 450-ton water chillers working nonstop to keep offices comfortable and the computer equipment from overheating.

Linville said that there is virtually no need to worry about heating the building's 61,500 square feet of raised floor computer space. A heat reclaim system is used to recirculate some of the warm air generated by the computer equipment to the remaining office areas.

"There's practically no such thing as a heating bill here," Linville said. "In fact, even if the outside temperature is just 10 degrees, the computers generate so much heat that the air conditioning system is operated like it is on a hot summer day," he said.

In regard to the start-up, Linville added: "I feel confident things will continue to run as successful here as they have next door. The other building has a track record that speaks for itself."



**Reed (left), manager building maintenance, and Gary Linville, supervisor building maintenance, are dwarfed by one of three emergency generators at the new Madison Park computer complex. This dynamo burns 96 gallons of fuel per hour and generates more horsepower than a diesel locomotive.**