

Profile

Bardsley cares, and shares his experiences as a CSA

Jerry Bardsley, customer service agent-IND, has a simple philosophy that he shares with the younger employees with whom he works each day. It comes from years of experience in this side of the business where patience, people skills, and communications are everything.

"Just try to put yourself in the passenger's shoes," he says. "No matter what the circumstances, you will be better able to understand their situation. But most importantly, to do a good job working the gates, you have to like people. If you don't like people, you probably won't last too long. At least, you shouldn't last too long."

Coming from an employee who joined Lake Central Airlines 27 years ago, it is a philosophy that Bardsley's co-workers—particularly newly-hired employees—have taken to heart and have continued to apply over the years.

"Life goes by too fast. You can't get upset and take things personally," he says. "Passengers sometimes get mad. Most times, they don't mean it. But CSAs are the first people they see when they get off an airplane or when they come down from the ticket counter. If they've had a bad day, they might want to take it out on us. But we have to understand. We all know what it's like to have a bad day."

Bardsley is not a training representative, nor is he a supervisor, although he has had experience working in both capacities. He simply prefers to stay where the real action is—at the gates as a CSA.

"I'm one of the few older employees still working as a CSA. Many of the others have gone on to positions in operations, on the ramp, or in air freight. But I still enjoy people and I'm real happy here."

Bardsley, a native of Ft. Wayne, joined Lake Central in Dayton, Ohio, when he was in his early twenties—back when being a CSA meant that you had multiple and overlapping duties. "Back



Jerry Bardsley, customer service agent (r), shows some of the tricks of the trade to Jamie Grimes, who recently joined USAir at Indianapolis as a special assistance representative.

when we did it all," as he puts it.

"Customer service is a little different now," he says with a knowing smile. "We worked the counter. We worked the gates, operations, air freight. And during a shift, we typically worked two or three of these different jobs one after another."

Within six years of joining Lake Central, Bardsley was transferred to St. Louis and promoted to lead agent in 1967 when the company opened a new station there. Soon thereafter, the small, struggling carrier was merged with Allegheny.

"Allegheny wasn't much bigger back then. But they were a lot better off financially. There were even times at Lake Central when we were asked not to cash our paychecks. Needless to say, we were really excited about joining Allegheny," he said.

"Lake Central was our own Midwest airline, and like Piedmont we were

kind of laid back people," says

Bardsley. "So, I think we were good for Allegheny, the same way Piedmont will be good for USAir."

Bardsley later transferred to Indianapolis and worked for about 11 years as a passenger service representative. He also worked for a brief time with baggage services, but soon moved back to the gates, where he has been since.

Bardsley plans to continue doing what he enjoys most and does best—assist passengers, as well as work with and guide the new, younger employees.

"I once worked for about a few months in the training department and I really enjoyed meeting all those 18-, 19- and 20-year olds. I can still relate to them. I remember what it was like not quite knowing what was best to do in certain situations," he said.

"They are going to be the company. We have to remember that."