How Airline Customer Relationship Management Takes Traveler Loyalty to New Heights

By **JENNIFER GOFORTH GREGORY - Contributor**

Glance through the news headlines and there's likely a story about an airline providing poor customer service. To overcome the current reputation airlines have with many customers, it's important to develop strong passenger loyalty. Integrating airline customer relationship management can help.

Use airline customer relationship management to personalize customer service and help passenger loyalty soar.

This differs from simply creating a loyalty rewards program. Loyalty is complex; it grows when culture and values are reciprocated between the customer and the business. It's more of an art than a science, and differs for each customer. The best way to grow loyalty is understanding and tailoring service and messaging to a specific customer's needs.

Loyalty also has a strong emotional component. According to a Forrester study reported on in Colloquy, emotion is one of biggest drivers of loyalty — creating customers who want to be customers, not ones who feel stuck with no other options. A recent Thrillist article explained why an airline with open seating and free bags has one of the highest loyalty ratings among customers: "It's a matter of creating a feel from the top down that flying should be fun. And for those few hours you spend in that ... plane, it tends to be."

Airline Customer Relationship Management Builds Loyalty

By providing customer service that goes above and beyond what's expected, airlines demonstrate the values of respect and courtesy. When airlines use their customer relationship management (CRM) tools to gather and use information to personalize passenger experience and demonstrate shared values, they provide a higher level of customer service, and loyalty grows.

Airlines can help travelers feel known and understood by using CRM to analyze customers' past behavior and predict likely future behavior. This past trip data helps airlines determine other destinations of interest, and they then can send passengers personalized offers for travel to both new and regularly visited destinations.

Because CRMs also track additional purchases, such as WiFi and upgrades, airlines can further personalize passenger offers. For example, a frequent traveler who purchases WiFi on every flight would almost certainly appreciate an offer from the airline to purchase a money-saving monthly WiFi pass.

Passengers experiencing delays and issues on every flight or connection during a trip will be understandably frustrated. Their frustration will only increase if each airline representative they encounter is only aware of the current issue instead of the full picture. By using CRM to identify passengers who encountered multiple trip issues, airlines can more promptly and effectively offer compensation, such as additional airline points or a discount on future travel. Tracking these details and anticipating traveler needs and desires makes it more likely the passenger will appreciate the airline's assistance and book travel with them again.

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CRM Integration Takes Loyalty to New Heights

Logging passenger data can be time consuming, and not all customers provide complete information. By integrating CRM with a business contact center, airlines can message customers as well as personalize and track customer communications. An integration between systems gives airlines the complete data they need to personalize each experience and strengthen passenger loyalty, and automating the process improves efficiency.

Integrating an SMS API lets passengers receive text messages as soon as a delay occurs or a gate is changed. By making an inconvenient situation easier, the airline provides a more responsive and personalized service that helps build loyalty.

This type of SMS integration also allows improved two-way communication between travelers and airline staff. Because texting is easier when on the go than making phone calls, travelers have more control over trip planning and can send a text to confirm travel updates or changes or to request further assistance. Airlines can also use chatbots to quickly answer simple traveler questions such as, "What gate should I go to?" or "What is the weight limit for my carry-on bag?" And with lost bags a common source of frustration, CRM with an SMS integration allows airlines to track bags and communicate their status to customers.

People are loyal when they feel that a business has their best interests at heart. Airline customer relationship management makes it easier to get to know passengers and increase their devotion to a specific brand. By making it as streamlined as possible to gather passenger information, airlines make it even easier for travelers to choose to fly with them.

Learn more about how travel and hospitality organizations utilize CRM and other solutions to create a seamless customer experience.