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Letter and Response from/to UAL VP to Reservation Agents

Author	Comment		
 ualnyc	<p>Letter and Response from/to UAL VP to Reservation Agents</p>	Lead	[-]
 Posts: 171	<p>Read this letter from VP Barbara Higgins (recruited from Disney!!) to reservation employees. What a slap in the face!!! She writes a travel documentary to employees who are losing their jobs to these foreign countries. She must be an idiot. What is she thinking????????????????????</p> <p>=====</p>		

(09/01/08 06:44)

ORD

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Subject: FROM rate desk JANE ON CHIRR

Date: Mon, 25 Aug 2008 21:46:48 +0000

Great letter from an employee in Chicago at the bottom to the 'New VP' who is trying to 'Blow Another Smoke Screen for United' over the U.S. based employees!!!

I know this is long; but quite interesting.

The 1st letter is from our *new* VP 'Worldwide Contact Centers'. She and Tony Bedalov now have offices at the CHIRR front office. Also at HNLRR and DTWRR. The 2nd letter is from a co-worker at our rate desk.

Jane

Greetings to everyone!

I am writing you this from my room in Pune, India, after having spent two days in Delhi visiting the companies who provide Reservations, Customer Relations, Bag Desk, Rate Desk and back office support for us here. Just outside my window is the train station; it has a broad blue corrugated metal overhangs to protect travelers from the rains (though today is dry), so all I can see from high up above are bright dots of color where the people wait for the trains. The country is full of color and different scents - bright saris of gold, orange and reds worn by the women, including lovely shawls to match, and everywhere the scents of clove, fenugreek, cumin and other spices. I haven't been able to do any exploring, since we are spending all of our time in contact centers here, but wanted to at least give you a sense of where we are from my limited exposure so far.

One of my first impressions upon arriving in Delhi was not sight or smell, but actually sound. Everywhere around you is the clanging of horns, the rhythm of the city punctuated by the staccato of cars honking. For those of you living in North America, this may seem odd - car horns in the North America context almost always mean impatience, irritation, or accusation. Hey, I'm in this lane, they seem to say, or, Hurry up, the light has turned green! In India, as in many

other parts of the world, the car horn is used to let the driver provide his bearings to those around him. Think about it more the way you would clang the bell on your bike to alert someone walking in front of you that you are coming up behind. Just wanted you to know that I am here on your left! I'm just about to overtake you, so please be aware! The car horns that I can hear even here, high above the train station, are even now a form of courtesy and orientation, alerting drivers to one another's positions.

We are here in India, as I had mentioned, to meet with the many vendors who provide United services. What we have found are eager, motivated employees, very proud to think of themselves as part of United, as well, and very much wanting to take care of our guests. The call center floors look very much the same as the centers in which each of you work, with UNITED painted on the wall and our service steps and guidelines hung up for all the agents to see.

I tell you this as I am sure each of you is thinking, yes, but why do we have to have suppliers in India doing this work for us? The answer is two-fold, and an important one for us to discuss, as I'd like each of you to be comfortable in understand this strategy.

First and foremost, the reason we have chosen to use third-party providers for some of our work is because the costs are significantly lower. In this part of the world, as in the Philippines (where we will be headed in a few weeks), the cost of living is far lower than it is in any of our existing United locations. Because of this, the wage rate is low. p; That means we can accomplish some of the same tasks for far less money, which makes good sense for us if the quality can be comparable. In the queue work we saw last night, I can assuredly tell you that the back office work is progressing with a high degree of quality by educated, intelligent agents.

The second reason is that we stand to gain from the

expertise of the service providers. Because they provide many of the same or similar services for other companies, we can learn from what the other companies are asking them to do, and we can also rely on their flexibility to cross-train the staff to match the ebbs and flows of our demand. Since the suppliers are experts in the contact center area, we are able to learn from some of the technology they have applied, the training tools they have pulled together, and the process improvements they have evaluated. This is good for all of us, so that we can continue to learn and also to continue to improve.

As I write this, I keep looking out my window. Two men in bright orange shirts are standing on the train tracks, hosing them down with water, so the dusty clay beneath them won't be stirred up too much by the approaching train. A train horn has sounded in the distance, even overpowering the courtesy honking continuing on the streets.

You may think that the agents are probably transactional, and don't care much if they are working on the United calls or calls for some other client. Surprisingly, perhaps, that simply isn't true - the agents we have seen identify very strongly with United; as one of the suppliers told us earlier in the week, his agents identify far more with us than they do with his own company!

Does this mean that everything is working well? Not necessarily. As you each may have heard from our guests, sometimes a call to one of these call centers isn't so satisfying. Rachel, Tony, Shyam, and Ralph Datoc, whose team manages the relationships with each of these suppliers, have all sat side by side with agents in these sites, observing calls. I have spent the better part of two days doing this. Some of the calls I listened to were technically correct, but rather than listening at a high level and understanding what the guest was calling about, the agent wanted to go back to the very beginning, pull up the PNR, and repeat many of the steps the guest had already

gone through. In every case, the agent meant very well and was trying to look out for any need the guest might have, but it may not have felt like that to our guests.

I was very candid with the service providers with whom we have met so far that understanding and easy comprehension of the English language needs to get better before we can say that this has been a success. They work very hard on voice and accent training, to minimize the need for our guests to strain to understand the agent, but we need to work on the agents not just understanding the English language, but really listening to what the guest is asking for. At one of the vendors, I sat through a self-directed training process where call snippets are played for the agents and then they have to answer multiple choice questions - what was the guest calling about? So there are many tools in place to help the agents challenge themselves here.

Last night we spent time with IGT, a vendor who provides us rate desk, queue work, and bag desk support. Their Q30 work has achieved 100% quality for every month this year, and we had the privilege of presenting a recognition award to the team who drove that accomplishment. They are very proud of their work, and rightly so. There are many back office activities that work very well here, and free you up to be able to do what you do best: talking to our guests and assisting them with their travel needs. When we get that balance right, we are being very smart about the way we are running our business, which is the goal.

We aren't necessarily making any decisions as a result of this trip; really the purpose was to help us think about what our work needs to be in 2009, and where we want to go in 2010. We are only half-way through our trip, so I am sure we will learn a great deal more, and I'll have more thoughts to share with you next week.

I'm looking out the window again. The men in the bright orange shirts have moved, and the train is in the station. I

watch as the colored dots of people pour onto the train, and look with interest as many more colors and shimmering shapes draped in fabric alight to the platform to take their place. If only I didn't have to go to the office in a few minutes! I could sit and watch the street and train station below all day.

Have a great week, and look after our guests.

All my best,

Barbara Higgins
Vice-President, Worldwide Contact Centers
United Airlines, Inc.
Chicago Reservations Office
11555 W Touhy Ave
Chicago, IL 60666

From: [name removed] [CHIRR]
Sent: Wed 8/20/2008 8:41 AM
To: Higgins, Barbara [CHIRZ]
Subject: RE: Hello from Barbara #3

Barbara,

I am a 24 year employee with United and must tell you that this latest email of yours is one of the most insulting from senior management that I've ever read. And I've read quite a few.

You so colorfully describe the surroundings of one of the cities to where my job has been outsourced. Do you really think I have any interest whatsoever in knowing about what you see, hear and smell? Do you truly believe any of us care about what the train station looks like, or what the workers are wearing?

We care about our jobs.

You describe how much United has to gain from the expertise of these vendors. Please help me understand something; Didn't United GO TO THESE LOCATIONS AND SET THEM UP in the first place? Is the technology and training tools you mention not United's? Are the vendors benefiting from technology that the U.S. employees don't? Didn't United establish the policies, procedures, provide training, etc? How is it that these vendors can be more of an 'expert' than your base employees who have been doing these jobs longer than we've even had vendors?

And many thanks to you for lauding the exceptional work being done by these people. It was so heartwarming to so many of us to hear that they were presented with an award of recognition. Apparently, you are not aware of what a slap in the face that was to all of us who have been providing quality work for so many years. NEVER has such praise been given on such a 'global' level to the Chicago res office, or the Detroit res office or Honolulu res office. Please try to imagine how great that felt.

Also, those of us who work Q30 here are quite puzzled about something that hopefully, you can clarify. You mention their achieving 100% quality every month. Perhaps you can share with us what it is that makes their work so outstanding compared to ours? And if their work IS so amazing, why do we have to spend so much time correcting their errors? We have come to the realization that United does not care how much revenue the vendors cost us in errors. Their lower wage scale you mentioned apparently offsets the cost of doing business correctly. But it is very important, Barbara, that you realize that WE CARE ABOUT OUR JOBS. We care about being appreciated, which your latest missive clearly conveys that we - the U.S. BASED EMPLOYEES - are NOT. And it would be greatly appreciated if you'd pass this along to others in senior management who somehow seem to have lost sight of this important point.

You exhalt the excitement these vendor employees have about working for us, and how they strongly identify with United. Please give us more credit, Barbara. We know how good that looks on a resume for these vendor employees.

On a final note, many of us here in Chicago reservations, specifically the Rate Desk, are very curious about one thing. You are writing to us from these far away destinations, meeting with the vendor employees, seeking ways for improvement, seeing the way they do business, etc. Why is it, with you having an office right here in the same building in which we are located, have you n ot even BEEN BACK TO THE RATE DESK area? Do you really intend to be that blatent in your disregard for us? Or is this merely an embarrassing 'oversight?'

There are other points of your email that I would've liked to address, but as my time allotted for reading briefings is limited, I'll close with this suggestion. Perhaps you can hold off for awhile on including us in the banalities of your off-shore visits. As I mentioned earlier, and I'm pretty sure I'm close in my estimate, 99% of us CARE ABOUT OUR JOBS.

Please continue your fine efforts on behalf of our 'guests', the feedback we get from them on a continual basis indicates (as you yourself mentioned), there is still much work that needs to be done.

Very sincerely,

[name removed]

CHIRR International Rate Desk

 **uniteddlr**

#1 [-]





Posts: 888
(09/01/08 06:50)

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BRAVO [name]

!!!!!!

You told her!

[\[name removed\]](#)

#2 [-]



Posts: 362
(09/01/08 07:04)
Former C20 LECP
C20 AFA Rep
Forum Moderator
FRASW

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Dear Friends,
as i am sitting in my Office in Chicagi IL, i am watching out of my window and see a Bird that just flew into a Engine of our 777 and i thought "poor Bird".
It was a nice red that spread all over the Engine, alomost like a Clinique Lipstick.
It is important for our guests that they understand , we care about Birds!
On another side note, we don't care much about our Employees as they are bloodsuckers anyway.

regards
Micky Mouse from the Wackerkingdom !

[el zorro](#)

#3 [-]



Posts: 13088
(09/01/08 08:22)
[name removed]
EzOp-Administrator
AFA Member, like it or not.



SFOSW

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Simply unbelievable! Unbelievable!

That letter has to be one of the most crass, in poor taste, letters I have ever read from management.

It should be sent to Michael Boyd.

I believe that Disney sent us Goofy.




(I am el zorro and I approve this message.)

[el zorro](#)

#4 [-]



Posts: 13089
 (09/01/08 08:56)
[name removed]
EzOp-Administrator
 AFA Member, like it or not.

 SFOSW

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It's like bringing a person home and explaining to your spouse/partner why you are replacing him/her with this new, cheaper version.

Hi Honey...I'd like you to meet Tanya. I picked her up on my trip to Russia. I met her in Red Square. Located on the site of the city's old market place, Red Square served as Moscow's equivalent of ancient Rome's Forum - a meeting place for the people. It served as a place for celebrating church festivals, for public gatherings, hearing Government announcements and watching executions, the latter becoming particularly commonplace during the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great and during the anarchic Time of Troubles in the early 17th century. Occasionally the Tsar himself would address the people from a platform on the square, named Lobnoye Mesto.

Anyway, Tanya was selling apples and I found myself drawn to her innocence and beauty. She's just 18 years old and I was fascinated by her sincere attempt to communicate with me. Would you believe I bought all of her apples? Ha ha. Well, Tanya and I hit it off so incredibly that we decided right then and there to get married and I brought her home with me. She is very impressed with America and has much to learn. I am very willing to teach her. I know that, in time, you will learn to understand and appreciate why she is replacing you as my wife. She and I will be going to Disneyland for a few days and that should give you plenty of time to pack your things and get out of my house. Take care.



(I am el zorro and I approve this message.)

SkyWahine

#5 [-]



Posts: 1192
 (09/01/08 09:45)
 [name removed]
 SFOSW

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Exactly!!



FlyingDesigner

#6 [-]



Posts: 89
(09/01/08 11:34)
SFOSW

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George, You should send that to Goofy... maybe she will realize she is a complete ignoramus. She's going to fit right in at WHQ.

[#7](#) [\[-\]](#)



Posts: 25
(09/01/08 13:18)

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Anyone know where you find the original email that BH sent? Is this "blog" somewhere on skynet?

[#8](#) [\[-\]](#)



Posts: 1025
(09/01/08 13:28)
ORD Inmate

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OMG! If this a "true" email/letter..I need medication. Please for the love of God...tell me this is an urban folklore kinda email! I am about to explode in 15 different directions. 🤪. Is Missy Thing eating Magic Mushrooms at her window while she complies this nonsense??? I am so shocked, I am actually in a fetal position in denial.

It must be nice to "Be in the Happiest Place in the World" in her head. She is a crack rock smokin' fool! 🤪

Uggggggggggggggggggggggggg!

[#9](#) [\[-\]](#)



Posts: 5829
(09/01/08 16:41)
[name removed]
UAFACC - Administrator
ORDSW

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I'm just confused where she is referred to as "new" VP. She's been here since Jan '07. Maybe she has a new title, but she's not new to UA.

Great letter from the employee. If this is legit, and it seems it is, I'd like to know if this was a mistake email, like the "400" letter Gaspard sent out a few years ago!

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