

# Turbo Leadership Systems™

# The TURBO Charger

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To our clients and friends

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## Attention to Attendant's Attendance



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*What are your  
customers  
hearing on the  
front lines?*

Last Sunday, my wife Donna Lee and I were waiting for the boarding announcement of our flight home from Denver to Portland, the gate agent made an announcement. I heard, "We can't board" – "FAA regulation" – "until" – I couldn't understand what he was saying. I walked over to the podium. "I couldn't hear the announcement. Did you say the flight had been delayed?" "Yes, we can't board the aircraft until we have four flight attendants." His 2-way radio blasted. He began to repeat what he was hearing: "You can't find, you can't locate the fourth flight attendant? Well that's frickin' great news." He was obviously under a lot of pressure.

Your job, our job, as leaders in these kinds of situations is never to add additional pressure. Our job is to relieve some of the pressure at the moment, drill down later to look for the problem in the process, and, as appropriate, coach or correct any below-standard or unacceptable behaviors. Don't name, blame and shame team members – name the problem, claim your part in it, then reframe it by looking at the problem as a part of the process.

A few minutes after being told about the delay, another announcement was made. This time we were told that the flight was oversold. Some folks were asked to volunteer to give up their seats and fly the following day – free tickets to anywhere United Airlines flies – a hotel pass, meal tickets, etc.

As we were getting seated, I overheard a lot of unhappy talk among the flight attendants. The steward didn't have his tie tightened

and the stewardesses were disheveled, as though all of them had rushed to get dressed. There was tension in the air, and this doesn't make for happy flying.

The climb out of the Denver airport was rough. I have flown over 100,000 miles in the past 12 months. I am not a squeamish flyer, but I will admit I was a little uncomfortable. I found myself wondering if the captain and his crew's performance, as well as my safety, could be affected by the attitude of the noticeably disturbed attendants.

Now let's go back to the gate agent. First of all, there's something wrong in the process if you don't have flight attendants ready for the departure of a scheduled flight. Second, there is no excuse for unacceptable behavior, and the agent's behavior was unacceptable. If his supervisor is aware of this behavior, appropriate discipline needs to be administered. This airline suffered with me, and I would bet with many of the other passengers. The behavior of the gate agent left a black mark or two, and the image of the airlines was diminished. The unacceptable behavior had a ripple effect that should not be ignored.

Regardless of how frustrating it was that the attendants were not on time for their presumably assigned flight, it is still no excuse for the agent to "go off." And as an empowering leader, there is no excuse for you to ignore, excuse, or disregard unacceptable behavior. Finally, there is absolutely no excuse for you to resort to similar unacceptable behavior as you correct the same.

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