

'Competency-based' service training for flight attendants improves passenger satisfaction

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Specialized "competency-based" cabin service training for airline flight attendants seems to improve customer satisfaction levels, according to a study in the July 2017 edition of the double-blind, peer-reviewed *Journal of Aviation/Aerospace Education & Research (JAAER)*, published by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Currently, individual airlines determine whether [flight](#) attendants receive "competency-based training" (CBT) focused on cabin service proficiency, yet this form of professional development clearly seems to improve [passenger satisfaction](#) levels, Latoya Gibbs, Lisa Slevitch and Isaac Washburn of Oklahoma State University reported.

Their research article in *JAAER*, titled "Competency-Based Training in Aviation: The Impact on Flight Attendant Performance and Passenger Satisfaction," assessed a total of 780 questionnaires given to airline passengers both before and after 109 flight attendants had received competency-based service training.

Customer satisfaction levels were higher after flight attendants had completed a two-day training program geared towards competency development based on a well-accepted definition set forth by the International Civil Aviation Organization, Gibbs, Slevitch and Washburn reported. In particular, flight attendants were trained in four nationally recognized competency-focused units: managing stress, dealing with conflict situations, displaying human relations skills and delivering quality [customer service](#).

On 317 pre-training questionnaires and 463 questionnaires completed after flight attendants had received training, passengers were asked, "Overall, how would you rate the level of [customer](#)

service you received on the flight?" Passengers were also asked to rate flight attendants' performance across various categories of customer service such as courtesy, efficiency, attentiveness and so on. Researchers saw a "statistically significant" difference in [customer satisfaction](#) ratings among passengers whose flight attendants had gone through the CBT program.

"Frontline service employees like [flight attendants](#) create a critical impression of the service by their behaviors and attitudes, which can significantly affect customer perceptions and satisfaction," the researchers wrote. "CBT is to ensure that whether cabin crews encounter a special need (such as expectant mothers, unaccompanied minors, incapacitated passengers or the elderly) or a disruptive passenger, they have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes and are competent to effectively handle each situation."

The authors noted that the study - believed to be the first to explore the relationship between CBT, flight attendant performance and customer satisfaction - was limited in scope because it assessed data from only one airline, over a short time-period, and most survey respondents were vacation travelers.

More information: commons.erau.edu/jaaer/

Provided by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

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