

Case Study

The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey



The Client

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey operates many of the busiest and most important transportation links in the New York City region. They include John F. Kennedy International (JFK), Newark Liberty International (EWR), LaGuardia (LGA) and Teterboro airports; AirTrain JFK and AirTrain Newark; the George Washington Bridge; the Lincoln and Holland tunnels; the three bridges between Staten Island and New Jersey; the PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) rapid-transit rail system; the Downtown Manhattan Heliport; Port Newark; the Elizabeth-Port Authority Marine Terminal; the Howland Hook Marine Terminal on Staten Island; the Brooklyn Piers/Red Hook Container Terminal; and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in midtown Manhattan. The agency also owns the 16-acre World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan.

LRA helps JFK, LaGuardia and Newark Liberty International Airports improve the passenger experience

"The Brand Assurance program we developed with LRA is an important tool to help ensure that the airports' promise of delivering a customer experience second-to-none is consistently executed, and customers' expectations are exceeded."

*Waguih F. Ouess, Manager - Customer Services
Aviation Department, PANYNJ*

The Situation

JFK, LGA, and EWR international airports function as the global gateway to the New York metropolitan region, and the Port Authority recognized that serving its passengers well was as fundamental to the region's success as it was to the Port Authority's bottom line. Further, passengers had begun to seek out some alternatives to traveling out of the three metropolitan airports. In order to best ensure growth in this critical marketplace, the Port Authority increased its focus on providing a friendlier and more efficient airport experience. With its efforts to modernize underway, JFK, EWR and LGA had each ranked in the bottom quartile for traveler satisfaction in travel surveys. To compound matters, Southwest Airlines had begun offering low-cost service out of MacArthur Airport on Long Island, potentially diluting traveler volume.

The Solution

LRA assisted the Port Authority in obtaining feedback impacting the customers' airport experience. LRA then designed and implemented a comprehensive standards manual that established detailed service and product standards and procedures developed in cooperation with airline partners and terminal operators. Using the newly developed customer service and product standards as a guideline, LRA deployed an ongoing quality assurance mystery shopping program consisting of a rigorous audit and inspection of all product and service standards at the three airports. The periodic inspections focused on the experiential elements that most directly influenced passenger and visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Areas of focus included 1) the cleanliness, condition and presentation of airport parking areas, gate areas, baggage claim, food and beverage concessions, restrooms, corridors, retail shops; 2) signage and lighting; and 3) employee attitude, appearance, knowledge and responsiveness.

As part of the process of re-engineering the airport experience, The Port Authority introduced a program of direct contact Customer Care Representatives to assist travelers. A trained airport employee – in a "Red Coat" – serves as a de facto roving concierge, assisting travelers with directions, questions and other needs.

The Results

As a result of this program, the airport and its employees, airline partners, concessionaires and contractors placed a much greater emphasis and focus on measuring and improving the overall air travel experience. Not only did passenger satisfaction levels steadily improve in the last four years, but the PANYNJ airports had moved to the top of the U.S. rankings of the air passenger traveler surveys conducted in 2006, winning honors for best medium-sized airport outright in the JD Power & Associates study. In addition, passenger visits at JFK-LGA-EWR have outpaced average national air traffic growth, even in the face of ever-increasing competition. With a systematic and continuous process for measuring and improving airport product and service quality in place, the results of this program speak for themselves.



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