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Coast2Coast Comfort Report



Eastside Report

Dave Yates, Master Plumber and owner/operator of F. W. Behler, Inc., one of the oldest plumbing, heating and air conditioning service companies in the United States (est. 1900).

Healthy HEATING



Comforting Your Mind, Body & *Soles*

You're Fired!

By Dave Yates

You're Fired!

Familiar words for viewers of Donald Trump's TV show. As an employer, I can assure you firing someone - whether it be a customer or an employee - is an extremely stressful event. We've been discussing ways in which you can set up a long-term business relationship with mechanical contractors and how that can improve the quality of life for you and, if you are assisting parents or elderly folks, managed care from a distance. After all the due diligence we've discussed in procuring the services of a contractor, how do you handle the relationship when things go horribly wrong?

We recently returned from an outstanding family reunion. My parents (Dad-87 and Mom-85) both required wheelchair assistance to negotiate the long rush between terminals in the three airports they'd face between eastern Pennsylvania and Colorado. One of my brothers and his wife arranged to take them out several days in advance to become acclimated to Denver's mile-high altitude. We would escort them on the return flights.

The first indication that things could easily unravel was the discovery that our local AAA had changed my parents' flights without changing ours or

bothering to notify us of the changes! No longer on even remotely similar flight times, my parents would be faced with handling their own luggage (considerable due to the trip being a bit more than two weeks long) and fending for themselves - stress they didn't need. Some quick maneuvers by my wife straightened out that mess, but not without considerable time spent on the phone with Delta.

The flights out to Denver were, according to my brother, smooth as silk. The wheelchairs awaited them at each of the three airports with attendants who were outgoing and friendly. The reunion was a huge success and it



was rewarding to see Dad reunited with his two sisters and their spouses. We met cousins we'd never met before and the dude ranch in the Rockies where we all lived for a week was outstanding! (<http://www.wrranch.com/>)

Now, before we left our home to travel and join in on the reunion festivities, we called Delta three times to ensure they knew my parents' health situation, about Dad's pacemaker (folks with pacemakers can't pass through metal detectors and arrangements need to be made in advance for them to be hand searched), and that wheelchairs would be needed. We were repeatedly assured all was in order, the extra security screening arranged and that wheelchairs would be waiting at each stop.

Upon arrival at Denver's airport, no one at Delta knew we required wheelchairs and a long wait took place in 94-degree heat curbside. The curbside check-in counter miss-read my parents tickets and told us we'd have to go to the Delta ticket counter on the upper level. Two attendants arrived with wheelchairs and whisked us off to the upper floor. One of them approached Delta's counter where a surly employee glanced at the proffered ticket and, without saying a word, walked off to wait on someone else! Eventually, we were directed to one of those irritating kiosks where you check yourself in and declare how many bags are to be checked - while idle Delta counter-folks looked on. Then we had to stand in line to hand these same bored attendants the luggage. Not one of them had a pleasant greeting or expressed thanks for using their airline.

Off to security - back to the ground floor - and an attempt to tell the lady guarding its entrance that Dad has a pacemaker. She did not speak English very well and neither of us was able to communicate. Both wheelchair attendants then tried talking with her and, they too, failed to get her to understand what was needed. Dad's ticket obtained from the kiosk did not



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have something on it regarding his pacemaker, so she insisted he return to the Delta counter for a hand-issued ticket. When I attempted to leave the security area to go with Dad, she pitched a fit and tried to keep me there. Fat chance! By now, I was beginning to wish I could have fired a rather large number of people, but unlike relationships with contracting firms, the heads that needed to roll were not readily accessible - just the employees. Besides which, it's not like we could fire Delta and switch airlines or somehow circumvent a security agent who had decided an 87-year-old man in a wheelchair was a potential terrorist that wasn't getting past her without, as it turned out, a stamp on his ticket indicating he was to be hand searched - the very thing we'd requested from her at the start!

Good, reliable and honest contractors have a vested interest in keeping you as a satisfied customer. We hate hearing Trump's famous line - "you're fired" - and you'll find that truly great contractors will bend over backwards to provide you with customer service that sizzles.

the stifling hot gangway. Dad was unable to support himself and slumped against the wall while I attempted to aid him. Mom and my family had exited the gangway to escape the oppressive heat. As the last stewardess and pilot exited the plane, the stewardess remarked that our experience was typical and similar to her own experiences when traveling with her parents! As employees of Delta, it was obvious they were either not empowered to correct customer service issues beyond the confines of the jet - a mistake on Delta's part if accurate - or they simply didn't care. Apathetic customer service is something you don't need to tolerate - no matter if it's Delta or a small contracting firm.

So, not only had we experienced a stunning lack of competency on Delta's part and been subjected to poor treatment by its employees, I now was faced with two Delta employees who were indicating poor service was to be expected! Top that off with a weird experience getting through security, and my anger-meter was off the charts.

Should I simply "fire" Delta? I don't know yet, but I will once I get a reply

Upon arrival in Cincinnati - no wheelchairs. One finally arrived and the second one never appeared. Both parents needed to visit the restrooms and Mom elected to walk.

Upon arrival in Baltimore - again, no wheelchairs were ready and, again, a long delay took place and, again, only one wheelchair arrived. We were made to wait for its arrival in

Dave is a Master Plumber who owns and operates F. W. Behler, Inc., one of the oldest plumbing, heating and air conditioning service companies in the United States (est. 1900) and he's been actively involved in sales for more than three decades. Yates is a columnist for several magazines, a dynamic public speaker and partner in JoDa Film Productions. He can be reached via e-mail at behler@blazenet.net

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Dave Yates has been known to jump through hoops for his customers!

“Their response, or lack thereof, will let me know quite clearly if Delta will be a hero or a zero - just as your response from a contractor will do the same.”

(or lack of reply) to the letter I'm sending them. As with any bad experience or job gone wrong when you've contracted to have work performed, the boss often won't, or can't, know about things gone wrong unless you let him or her know what transpired.



Instead of silently firing the company by taking your business elsewhere and going through the hassles of interviewing someone again, you're far better off to contact them - in writing preferably - to detail what went wrong. If you're hopping mad, chances are your letter will be full of vitriol and not well received.

I'll write a first letter to Delta that's designed to let me blow off all the pent-up steam in my boiler (head). That one will be set aside so I can write a rational letter with the details of what transpired, in as non-judgmental a manner as is possible, and, that one will be sent to the head of Delta's customer service department with a copy to their president. Their response, or lack thereof, will let me know quite clearly if Delta will be a hero or a zero - just as your response from a contractor will do the same. It's entirely possible that Delta has no control over the folks who manage the wheelchair service and highly doubtful they can do anything about security personnel, but a calmly worded letter may bring a

suitable response with further contact information on whom to contact at the other agencies. After all, Delta pays millions annually to utilize each of those airports and they have a vested interest regarding how their customers are treated in those facilities.

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