

instincts

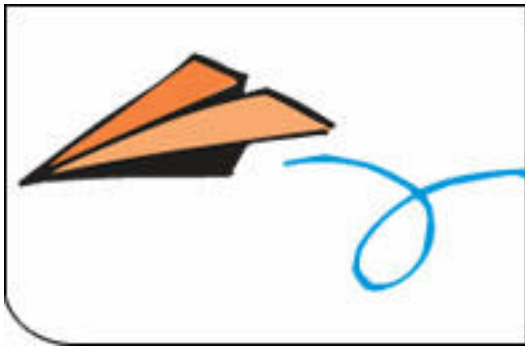
Instincts is a monthly publication on branding for clients, associates and friends.

Leading and inspiring all those who touch the enterprise
to understand, embrace and enhance the power of your brand.

Captain sensitive and the crashing brand.

Pilots must put in hours and hours of training to fly their planes safely. This, unfortunately, will not prevent the crash and burn when they come in for a 'branding'.

My brilliant 25 year old daughter, who is a Consultant with one of the best PR firms in the city, was returning to Toronto from a very, very long work day in Montreal one evening this past week. Her Air



Canada flight was to leave Montreal at 10pm, but didn't. After waiting 30 minutes and changing gates, they boarded the plane only to sit another 45 minutes before the pilot came on the loud speaker to say that there was "a strange thing happening under the wing and that maintenance would arrive shortly to look at it". Now, my dear daughter is a nervous flyer at the best of times, but this comment increased her usual discomfort and apparently that of many fellow passengers.

The wait continued. Ten minutes later, maintenance showed up and 20 minutes after that, the pilot came on again with a chuckle in his voice and said "it appears they have lost the gas cap". No one else on the plane shared his humor in the situation... probably wondering if the engines had been serviced by the same folks.

Another 20 minutes and Captain-sensitive comes back on the system (with a full laugh this time) and says the plane is ready, but that now he's "lost the crew" - who have apparently gone for a walk during the delay. Ten minutes after that (it's now 12:15am if you're keeping track), the plane finally leaves.

And to cap-off this painful display of customer service excellence, one of the recently returned flight attendants, running back and forth down the aisle, raised her voice several times at a passenger about not getting his seat-back into its vertical position. After a few admonitions, the poor customer had to yell back that the plane's seat was broken!

What would brand coach suggest?

Wrong gates, missing gas caps, broken seats, insensitive flight attendants, laughing captains, frightened passengers, incompetent maintenance people and late night schedules... Since your brand is what people think of you, this little flight from hell certainly reinforced what many people think about Air Canada.

Pilots and flight crews train extensively on safety procedures and that's a good thing. But a great brand, which must be lead by the CEO come CBO (Chief Brand Officer), must train employees to understand the role in customer care and in building the brand with every touchpoint.

If our 'National' carrier is ever going to stay ahead of WestJet's CBO Clive Beddow and his fun, on-the-ball, owner-employees, then Air Canada better... oh forget it!

Robert Milton may be a financial turn-around genius but he doesn't have a clue when it comes to Brand care... Air Canada may just need his expertise again.