

A little old-fashioned PR (for the airlines)

Yesterday was a good news day for the airlines, specifically for US Airways and United Airlines. Why? Because both apparently have engaged in some good, old-fashioned PR. Both companies released good stories about themselves, that then translated into major and positive coverage. Just like it is supposed to be.

USAir posted a story about how it is going to bring back free soft drinks to its economy cabins as of March 1. The news was reported across the board, from wire services to the evening news. And, USAir released this out as a news item before it sent out a notification to its frequent fliers. The company was seeking to get as much good mileage as it could out of this trite bit of news. USAir “admitted” that it miscalculated the negative impact of charging for beverages and that this negative coverage undermined its gains in on-time performance and baggage handling. I am sure it is also undermined employee morale as people silently shook their heads when asked to pay \$1 for a cup of lukewarm, ill-tasting coffee on board.

United did USAir one better. NBC Nightly News ran a piece about how United is now really cleaning airplanes between flights, something that had gone by the wayside. The piece talked about a guy dubbed “Mr.Clean” who has a title something like Director of Cabin Appearance. The point was to show that United is taking steps to improve customer experience onboard its aircraft. Again, this is classic PR. I am sure the airline pitched the angle that most airlines are filthy (they are) because in these economic times, airlines are cutting corners on cleaning crews or the amount of times a plane gets fully cleaned. United is bucking the trend because United wants to enhance its passengers’s experiences. Here’s a link

to NBC's Daily Nightly' blog discussing the story.

Bottom line: A bit of positive news can go a long way. Proof positive that PR works!

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