

JetBlue sells out ... in a good way

Did you hear about JetBlue's unlimited pass? For \$599 you can go anywhere during a month. You probably already heard about it, but now you can no longer get the pass because it is sold out. That's right, in just about a week, JetBlue was able to create so much demand that it was able to sell out. To me, that is the definition of a great marketing campaign.

Why is this such a great marketing campaign? For many reasons:

- First and foremost it **sold product**, in this case, seats on planes.
- It was **creative** and different from most airline promotions. It caused JetBlue to stand apart.
- Its creativity created buzz, and loads of **publicity**. Google is telling me that there were at least 226 articles about the promotion, and 50 articles about the selling out.

JetBlue has tapped into something customers want: lower cost air travel. But its not all about being cheap—Spirit Airlines is also cheap, but it does not offer the same experience. JetBlue is comfortable, offers snacks, TV in each seat, and it's generally a good experience. But it also distinguishes itself for being cutting edge. JetBlue has embraced Twitter by offering their “cheeps” (travel promotions). And its tries hard to provide good customer service.

It is a really good day in marketing when a promotion reaches its target while generating front page news, all for a comparatively low marketing dollar investment.

Bags Fly Free

Yes they do—on Southwest. What a great campaign for them. As the “legacy” carriers tack on more and more fees, cut flights, increase fares and generally screw the passenger, Southwest is going gangbusters (relatively speaking). They are actually adding routes and eschewing bag fees. Who do you think will keep or increase its customer base?

On the other hand, American cut all flights to Albany, NY and is charging \$30 roundtrip for the first checked bag, \$50 for the second. Additionally, they have added many fees and surcharges for everything from checking odd-sized bags, flying with a pet and changing your ticket.

I fail to see the marketing sense in what the large carriers are doing. If you are hurting for money, do you do everything you can to make sure your customers think twice about doing business with you? If what you are doing is ridiculed by many, and fodder for anger, is this not a public relations nightmare? What good news are you hearing about the airlines? Is there any additional perk that is being given to passengers who are paying through the nose? Why would you fly if you can drive for less money? Bottom line is that Southwest seems to get it and American, et al just don't. All you have to do is look at JetBlue. They started flying as the other airlines had started cutting back on the perks of travel. JetBlue gave passengers a real alternative, that cost less and get this: was more comfortable and had more amenities. This made JetBlue an extremely popular airline. In fact, the only reason JetBlue is not the biggest airline, in my opinion, is that they travel to secondary airports.

I just read an article on CNN regarding the fees and cutbacks.

The article also quotes travel experts who think the fares will keep climbing. I wonder if the airlines will be forced to slow down fare increases and nickel and diming if enough customers say no way. Southwest is definitely capitalizing on these sentiments and running an enticing campaign plus putting in place some smart operational plans.