

Fresh Air Matters... with Capt. Yaw

What is a delay? If like me you are getting frustrated at the apparent increase in delays, attempts to frustrate development and lackadaisicalness from and within certain sectors of our community, it is high-time to assess what we mean by a delay and how to fix it!

At least there is a 'definition' of what an Aviation delay is. If an aircraft is more than fifteen minutes late on arrival or departure, it is 'officially delayed'. At two hours 'delay' (called a 'long delay'), you are entitled in European countries to compensation, unless the delay is outside the control of the Operator. The point is that, Aviation operations are concerned to be efficient because they are measured on it, grow based on it and are punished if they are not being efficient! Wouldn't it be nice if this could be applied to the plethora of agencies that seem to believe that 'patience' is a good product to be selling! The belief that one is training others to 'exercise patience' is all too often used as an excuse – an excuse that the Aviation industry simply does not accept. Delays do occur, and we all accept a certain amount of them. Serious companies keep extensive stocks of spares, have contingency plans, and make sure that they inform their clients and work hard to keep everything running smoothly as much as they can. I will admit to believing that, in our environment, it is much more difficult to meet these standards; and, consequently, we accept delays of up to an hour without *too much* agitation. Traffic in Accra seems to account for most of those 'one-hour-delays' in my life!!

I have had an unprecedented contact with our friends in the Police and the Courts over the recent past, and I am amazed at what is 'acceptable' in terms of delays, confusion, mixed-up days and dates and time-wasting for the service, as well as the general public. I am compelled to believe that there is absolutely no need for the current extent of these things, and consider that a reflection on the Aviation industry success in resource management could be applied successfully in the services that serve us all in our day-to-day security, peace and tranquillity. Such a change would benefit us all, and especially our friends in the Police and the Courts. Before I upset too many people (it is probably too late since some are rather sensitive), I realise that there are criteria beyond reasonable control that impinge on some of these concepts. Nonetheless, I am fervent in my belief that there is far too much time and energy wasted, deviation from intended paths and, consequently, under-utilisation of resources for our Country and its people.

OK, so I mentioned traffic, and with it goes parking. When attending different meetings at Police Headquarters or the Courts, it amazes me that the parking situation is such a time-waster. Poor organisation, lack of direction and consistent lack of cooperation seems to be the desired norm. Of course, the 'big men and women' don't get to see that; they are 'ushered' into the special places. Consider the time that could be saved and, with it, productivity increased, by looking at the road utilisation and parking situation with the same attention to detail as we see at Kotoka! Our international airport cannot accept delays due to poor road infrastructure and parking solutions and works hard to establish a meaningful, sustainable, forward-looking system; and one that is secure, clean and comfortable to use. Surely, if we can do this at KIA, we can do it on a wider basis and improve our efficiency – even in Accra!

Of course, after struggling to get to your destination and then spending another forty minutes parking and climbing the stairs to the office or court you need to visit, you realise that there wasn't any need to rush. The person concerned is not at his/her desk, not available, not ready, eating lunch or perhaps has gone sick

without informing you – or indeed confused the day and the date (of course some make you wait to show how 'big' they are, which is small minded). The court cases enjoy adjournments, not at all always because of the Courts; lawyers, plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses are not finished at another court, did not receive notice of the hearing, forgot, have malaria, needed to travel, called to a funeral, etc. Perhaps the Courts should be more like the airlines and, after fifteen minutes of reasonable delay, offer to unload the baggage of the offending passenger causing the plane to hold... but of course, that might be considered unfair... but is it really? What about a 'long delay' of two hours or more (this is currently the norm in my experience)? If, and of course I do mean IF, all the notices have been served in sufficient time, with the correct days and dates, the traffic and parking situation smooth, and telecommunications systems working, then it would be perfectly reasonable to 'unload' a court case. Wouldn't it? That would quickly decongest the legal system!!!

When I was a lecturer, I would always explain to my students that they were late after one second into the lecture. It may seem unfair, but it is true that the person needed to start a lesson is the lecturer and... that is it. Likewise, a church service can start as soon as the church has the pastor and... that is it. So, if we delivered lectures as soon as the time came, and church services as soon as the time came, and Courts heard cases as soon as the time came... the people who would benefit from their happenings would need to be there on time. Of course, it would also mean that, if delayed by officialdom, the public could leave without issues, complaints or recourse from the 'officers'... It needs to be a two-way traffic!

How often are we delayed without necessity by the Police? I know that the Police are under-resourced, but so am I, and so are all of the airlines and GCAA. The difference is, that the airlines and GCAA are more readily measured and openly criticised for delays – and the cost is more visibly applicable.

Perhaps, if the Courts, the Police and all of the other agencies around had their performance measured in the same way as the Aviation industry, they would have the powerful arguments needed to change the status quo and to improve standards, reduce the waste of their time (and that of the public they deal with) and to concentrate on the target areas necessary to make this wonderful country even more wonderful.

These concepts are not just for Aviation-related companies, the Police and the Courts, they are for every single business and activity we do. But when it affects the core of our national peace and tranquillity forces, we need to help them and encourage them. The best way is to learn from the most successful industry in the world when it comes to efficiency and safety when dealing with the public – Aviation.

If you do not read of me next week, you will know that I must be waiting in some Police station or court somewhere... probably charged with 'inciting a change in the status quo!'

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