

## Can I Count On You?

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My travel schedule lately has been pretty intense; three to four cities per week and sometimes waking up not knowing for sure where I am until the second cup of java. I am grateful for the work and love doing it. But with busy schedules can come scheduling problems and, quite frankly, a certain amount of risk.

A few weeks ago, I spoke to a group of hotel managers and owners in Jacksonville, FL and then had to jet to Austin, TX for an after-lunch presentation the following day. Due to commitments in Jacksonville, I was going to miss the last flight out on Monday and was forced to consider my options for early Tuesday morning. Several of the major airlines could get me to Austin and they all arrived within a couple hours of my speech. When you consider baggage claim, auto rental and drive time to the venue, that is cutting it pretty close.

As I sat in front of my laptop, considering all the options, I was able to recall the multiple times that each airline left me hanging from a delayed or cancelled flight. This trip was high risk. If I don't give the speech, I don't get paid. I could be out money for the flight, rental car, etc and find myself in a city I don't need to be in; losing the paycheck to boot. Of all the airlines I have used over the last few years, only one has *never* left me stranded – Southwest.

I booked the airfare, took the risk and everything went off without a hitch. Southwest actually arrived at the gate 15 minutes ahead of schedule and I easily made the presentation. Here is my point: when the chips were down, I looked to the air carrier that had been the most dependable for me in the past. In fact, I could have taken two other carriers for less money and chose not to. I was more than willing to pay a little extra to be guaranteed an on time arrival.

Past behavior is indicative of future behavior. How reliable are you in the minds of your customers? Can I show up at your hotel at the posted check in time and count on a room being ready for me? Can I depend on you to consistently deliver the quality and service that you promise?

We live in a world full of exceptions and we fight demons every day that give us good excuses for missing the mark. But for those rare few who refuse to take the easy road, there's a level of trust and loyalty in their customers that is second to none. Southwest has done such a great job of delivering what they promise that I use them as my preferred airline every time. I'll deal with the boarding process.