

DUDE, WHERE'S OUR GALLEY?

The Continued Trend of Doing More with Less

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I love working the galley position. I'm the one back there feverishly counting, sorting, rearranging and dividing from the epicenter of cabin ops. Ever the galley addict, I want to see the smoothest, most efficient aisle service my prep work might avail. OK, I admit, I can go a little overboard. Sometimes I align the little bags of pretzels just so in my top drawer and smash the ice into perfectly uniform chips. And since I'm coming clean about my neurotic galley ways, I confess it was I who used all the tape on the trash bins, creating a masking tape shortage for the entire Atlantic operation. (Why can't they just find a liner that fits?)

Our service has become an ever-expanding juggling act, requiring exact precision to balance thermoses, marketing wares, buckets and improvised tools atop dwindling horizontal cart space. It follows that our galleys might be modified to meet the expanded demands of inventory and service, right? Wrong.

Next time there's nothing on cable, check out the DeltaTube video collection on DeltaNet—specifically “Galley Changes,” starring Managing Director of Onboard Services Peter Wilander. Or skip it and read the following spoiler. *Delta is removing our MD88 and MD90 aft galleys to add more cabin seats.* The “financial benefit of this is just enormous,” claims Wilander, explaining that it creates the equivalent of an additional eight or nine aircraft in the fleet, at minimal cost to the company.

“Of course that creates some challenges to service delivery—unquestionably,” he admits. On that note, we are left hanging in anticipation of solutions to the challenge of serving 150-160 passengers with the small single galley that remains. But the “solutions” footage must have hit the cutting room floor.

Next comes the fun part. Rather than simply dropping the bomb that these aircraft will have less workspace and more passengers than ever, the news is delivered with a benefit package sales pitch to help you cheer the change.

There are positive things in this change, we are told, starting with “no fewer jumpseats onboard the aircraft.” Do we really want to start down the road of measuring what is positive by counting what we have left?

We will also enjoy the “benefit” of an extra flight attendant on the MD90. Never mind it's now FAA required.

“Opportunity” Redefined

“The other nice thing,” says Wilander, “is we are reprovisioning an oven in the forward galley.” This will be very beneficial, he explains, “because it will provide an opportunity to serve hot food on some flights where we don't have that opportunity now.” Hmmm. Wouldn't it be great if our next opportunity was to reprise the old hot soup service? The benefit: hand running each bowl.

I genuinely value our premium customers and their business. If the “Year of the Customer” and the

coveted JD Power award could be realized with a mixture of Harmonization, Modifications, Synergy, and Enhancements, I'd say make plans for the victory party.

In real life, though, it's hard to reconcile that hot meal "opportunity" with the general outrage we hear about overheated airplanes, catering shortages, cramped seating and too many bags.

Just when you thought you had nothing left to give . . .

As frontline employees, we understand it is the passengers' repeat business that pays our salaries. Unfortunately, flight attendants are once again being asked to shoulder the burden of increasing revenues. To that end, we've already sacrificed our money, our time, and our patience. On the heels of bankruptcy and a sour economy, we have nothing left to give but our workspace.

Oh, and the income from those nine extra "airplanes" borne of our galley space? According to Delta, "the capital that would have been required to purchase new aircraft will instead be used to upgrade products important to Delta's premium customer base, like IFE and flat bed seats on all international aircraft." At what point will flight attendants be viewed as partners in this endeavor?

AFA filed a grievance over the MD88 and MD90 galley removal and cabin modifications—not to hinder revenue opportunities, and not even because the "enormous financial benefits" were rerouted from our pockets. The grievance was filed because the company ignored their contractually required opportunity to consult with the union prior to "the alteration of existing aircraft interior designs or configurations related to Flight Attendants' working and crew rest areas, safety, security and health." (CBA Section 22) While keeping financial solvency in mind, we are highly conscious of safety, design, customers, and colleagues, and how service, turbulence, and limited galley space are intertwined. It adds insult to injury that Delta's fast-tracked boardroom makeover video was delivered with a spoonful of benefits sugar.

We provide legendary, gracious service not because we learned about it on a poster, but because it's who we are. We look forward to filling our seat at the table to negotiate wages commensurate with the rigorous demands of a post-bankruptcy flight attendant career. We expect our voice to be recognized, not only because the contract requires it, but because our experience and forethought has value.

I worked on the MD80 just once the week before it was retired from the Northwest fleet. After being on the DC9-50, it was such a novelty for us to have a galley in the back of the plane. Sure, we rolled our eyes at the 1960s style coffee pot, and the containers were positively vintage. Still, I don't think we could have imagined working that busy MSP-SLC flight without it. Taking out the galley in the back of the MD88 and MD90 might have seemed like an impossible scenario a few years ago, but it's oddly commonplace in this climate of doing more with less. Taking stock of what we have and what's going away, I can't think of any more we can give. I'm hoping that our future brings some *addition* and not always *subtraction*. (Oh wait, there is that new oven up front...)